AN

ACCOUNT OF AN EMBASSY

TO

THE KINGDOM OF AVA,

IN THE YEAR 1795.

BY

LIEUT-COLONEL MICHAEL SYMES

TO WHICH IS NOW ADDED,

A NARRATIVE

OF THE

LATE MILITARY AND POLITICAL OPERATIONS

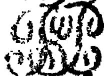
IN

THE BIRMESE EMPIRE.

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY, ITS MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND INHABITANTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR CONSTABLE AND CO.

1827.

TO THE

CHAIRMAN,

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN,

AND

DIRECTORS

OF THE

HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY,

THIS ACCOUNT

OF

AN EMBASSY TO AVA,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR MOST OBEDIENT,

AND

MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

MICHAEL SYMES.

THE EDITOR'S PREFACE.

The able and interesting work of Colonel Symes on the Birman Empire, or Kingdom of Ava, has now become exceedingly scarce. In reprinting it in a new shape, and in adding to it an abstract of the historical events which have taken place, since the termination of his embassy, together with as much information of a miscellaneous kind, as may be gathered from various recent sources, it is the object of the Conductors of this Miscellany to present to the public of Great Britain as complete and satisfactory an account as possible of a country to which the attention of all classes has of late been so much directed.

Altogether independent of the peculiar importance which our Eastern possessions must ever induce us to attach to those countries upon which they border—and with which they are consequently more immediately connected—the Birman Empire is worthy our best consideration, were it only

from the fact, that, of all the Eastern nations, it is second in power and greatness to China alone. It appears, therefore, not a little remarkable that, till within the last few years, so much ignorance should have prevailed regarding it; and even at the present moment, there is every reason to believe that the notions generally entertained upon this subject are extremely confused and erroneous. The very geographical outlines of the country are imperfectly known; whilst its internal resources—its government—its manners—its institutions civil and military, religious and political—are only guessed at from newspaper report, or the occasional publication of an official gazette.

There would be something very far from commendable in this apathetic want of curiosity, in whatever quarter of the globe Birma was situated; but when, from its contiguity to British India, we find it acquiring an importance which, in our eyes, nothing else could give it, it were strange not to wish to know all that is most essential regarding it. Accordingly, a spirit of more active inquiry has recently sprung up; and the present work, we should hope, will not so much awaken, as gratify that spirit.

The work of Colonel Symes, which was published about the conclusion of the last century, was the first which presented us with enlarged and distinct views of the Ava empire. It commences with an historical memoir, evidently compiled with great care and judgment, in which he narrates, with much precision and elegance of diction, all the events of the Birmese history, upon the authenticity of which any reliance can be placed, from the earliest period down to his own times. This introductory portion of his work is highly important, and certainly places in a new, and probably unexpected, light, the Birmese national character—giving proofs as it does of a courage, perseverance, patriotism, and intelligence, which few were perhaps prepared to expect. The various fortune, too, of their numerous wars with their neighbours and hereditary foes—the Peguers and Siamese—the incidents connected with them, and the circumstances arising out of them, which afford opportunities for the display of every peculiarity of natural disposition and temperament, cannot fail to be perused with that attention which both the narrative and the narrator so well deserve.

Nor must it be forgotten, that in this valuable Introduction we find the best account extant of the first settlement of English and French factories on the Birmese coast—of the difficulties they had to encounter—of their disastrous fate at Negrais—and of their subsequent removal to Rangoon, Tavoy, Mergue, and other places, where they now flourish more securely.

Having thus prepared us to take an interest both in the object of his embassy and the people with whom he is to associate, Colonel Symes proceeds with his personal narrative. Here his descriptions, being drawn from personal observation, become of course more vivid, and he seems to be particularly anxious to carry the reader continually along with him. His style is unadorned, but it is exceedingly perspicuous, and accomplishes, by its very simplicity and straight-forwardness, all that could be effected by the most elaborate study. His whole heart seems to have been given to the purposes of his mission; and, to a person of his liberal and enlightened mind, these were not confined to the mere delivery of his credentials at the court of Ava, and the establishment of a more friendly

and liberal intercourse between Birma and the country which he represented. He was anxious, also, to make himself practically and usefully acquainted with the situation, extent, produce, climate, and other statistical details of the kingdom he was visiting, as well as with the manners and customs of its inhabitants. In all this he appears to have succeeded to an extent beyond that of any traveller who either preceded or has followed him. From the moment of his landing at Rangoon, during his stay there, during his voyage up the magnificent Irrawaddy, during his protracted residence at Amerapoora, and, in short, upon every occasion, ardently and unremittingly he employed himself for the benefit of his countrymen in extending his knowledge of this remarkable people.

Such being the important and comprehensive nature of Colonel Symes' work, it would probably appear superfluous to have added any thing to it, were it not recollected that upwards of thirty years have elapsed since he wrote. In that period no change of any consequence has taken place in the national character and habits of the Birmese—for Eastern nations in general are not much

given to change—and his descriptions, both of persons and places, are as true at the present day—and will continue so for many years to come—as they were at the moment of his committing them to paper. But, in the interim, events have happened, and proceedings have been instituted by the Birmese, which have deeply interested and affected this country, and which are still fresh in the recollection of every one. Not to have touched upon these would have been an unpardonable omission. To the Account of the Embassy, therefore, a short, but it is hoped satisfactory, narrative of the late military and political operations in the Birmese Empire has been added. To this narrative it has been the Editor's object to subjoin as much information, in a popular and graphic shape, as he can collect from various sources, and which Colonel Symes may have overlooked, regarding the literature, religion, jurisprudence, public character, and domestic habits of the people.

That the Birmans are not undeserving the attention which this country seems now disposed to give them, is abundantly evident, both from our having found them such formidable antagonists in war, and from our knowledge of their importance as

auxiliaries and commercial neighbours in time of peace. Some of the most experienced officers of the British army have borne testimony to the progress made by the Birmese in the art of war—having had various opportunities of seeing them take up and maintain their positions "with a judgment," in the language of Sir Archibald Campbell, "which would do credit to the best instructed engineers of the most civilized and warlike nations." That they are also every year becoming more proficient in the various arts of peace, and fast rising in the scale of Oriental dynasties, is equally undoubted; and, to borrow the words of Colonel Symes, "as they are not shackled by any prejudices of casts, restricted to hereditary occupations, or forbidden from participating with strangers in every social bond, their future advancement will, in all probability, be rapid."—"At present," he continues, "so far from being in a state of intellectual darkness, although they have not explored the depths of science, nor reached to excellence in the fine arts, they yet have an undeniable claim to the character of a civilized and well-instructed people. Their laws are wise, and pregnant

with sound morality; their police is better regulated than in most European countries; their natural disposition is friendly and hospitable to strangers; and their manners rather expressive of manly candour than courteous dissimulation. The gradations of rank, and the respect due to station, are maintained with a scrupulosity which never relaxes. A knowledge of letters is so widely diffused, that there are no mechanics, few of the peasantry, or even the common watermen (usually the most illiterate class) who cannot read and write in the vulgar tongue." All these things considered, it is impossible to avoid coming to our author's conclusion—that "the Birmans bid fair to be a prosperous, wealthy, and enlightened people."

It is unnecessary, we conceive, to extend these introductory remarks to any greater length. The following pages will speak for themselves; and, in the nature of the information they convey, will be found, we should hope, to afford at least an adequate recompense for the labour of perusing them.

HENRY G. BELL.

EDINBURGH,
June 1827.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

In presenting this work to the Public, I obey the dictates of a duty incumbent on every person, the incidents of whose life have afforded him an opportunity of visiting countries that are either unknown, or imperfectly described; and, by communicating his information, to add somewhat to the stock of general knowledge.

Of the kingdom of Ava, or the Birman Empire, so little is known to the European world, that many persons of liberal education, when the name of the country has been mentioned, were at a loss on what part of the globe to seek for its position; and some were even unacquainted with the existence of such a nation.

This obscurity renders any apology for introducing my work to the Public unnecessary; and I have only to lament my own inability to do justice to so important a subject. The military profession, in every

part of the world, is unpropitious to literary attainments; but in India, where no repositories of European learning are to be found, and armies are continually moving over a vast region, it can hardly be expected that the soldier and the scholar should be united. It has been my lot to serve in that distant country from an early age, until I attained the meridian of life; and it may perhaps soften criticism, that I aspire not to the ornaments of language, and little at a polished structure of style. I have written my own book. My chief object is to be intelligible: and my single claim, to be believed.

The rise and fortunes of Alompra, and the establishment of the present Birman dynasty, supply a short, but highly interesting, period of Oriental history. These extraordinary events, having happened within the memory of many persons still living, are authenticated by individuals who themselves bore a part in the transactions: and although their relations are liable to that bias which is inseparable from the human mind, when the passions are engaged, and self-interest is concerned; yet the leading facts are such as do not admit of misrepresentation. To these, therefore, I have confined myself as closely as perspicuity would allow.

In the orthography of Birman words I have endeavoured to express, by appropri-

ate letters, the sounds as they struck my own ear. At the same time it is proper to remark, that scarcely any two persons will apply the same English letters to the same Birman words. This variation, which extends to the writing of all Eastern languages, and is not easily to be remedied, greatly discourages the English reader, and diminishes the pleasure of perusing books on the affairs of India. In the names of places I have generally followed the orthography of Mr Wood, in his excellent chart of the Irrawady, the great river of Ava.

I cannot quit the subject without offering my tribute of thanks to my noble friend, Lord Teignmouth, with whom the mission to Ava originated. He selected me to execute the plans which he had formed; and his approbation of my labours is numbered among the most flattering circumstances of my life.

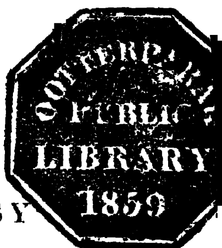
MICHAEL SYMES.

Welbeck Street,
Feb. 24, 1800.

EMBASSY

TO

AVA.



EMBASSY

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CHAPTER I.

DIVISIONS OF BURMAN EMPIRE—ARRACAN—AVA—PEGUE AND SIAM—CONQUEST OF AVA BY THE KING OF PEGUE—ORIGIN OF ALOMPRA—HIS AMBITION—HIS SUCCESS—VICTORIES OVER THE PEGUERS—INJUDICIOUS POLICY OF THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH RESIDENTS—THE FORBEARANCE OF ALOMPRA—SIEGE AND SURRENDER OF THE CAPITAL OF PEGUE—ASCENDANCY OF THE BURMANS.

There are no countries on the habitable globe, where the arts of civilized life are understood, of which we have so limited a knowledge, as of those that lie between the British possessions in India and the empire of China. Concerning India beyond the Ganges, scarcely more was known to the ancients, than that such a country did exist. Undeserved importance is oftentimes attributed to

that which is imperfectly known; and hence we find, in the Map of Ptolemy, the terms Aurea Regio, Argentea Regio, and Aurea Chersonesus, bestowed on countries eastward of the Ganges, and on the peninsula that divides the Bay of Bengal from the Magnus Sinus, or Gulf of Siam. But although no satisfactory information is to be obtained from writers of antiquity, respecting the population, produce, extent, or geographical position of those regions; yet it may be concluded, that, even at the remote era when Ptolemy compiled his chart, the ports of the Eastern Peninsula were the seats of commerce, and resorted to by foreign merchants; as that author distinguishes places of note on the sea-coast by the titles Emporia; but with what people trade was carried on, or in what commodities they trafficked, is not any where ascertained.

From this period, almost total darkness seems to have obscured India *extra Gangem* from the eyes of Europeans, until the enterprising genius of Emanuel, at the close of the 15th century, opened a new world, and laid the foundation of general wealth to Europe, on the ruin of the Egyptian trade, and of the state of Venice. Early in the 16th century, the Portuguese made themselves masters of Malacca, and soon acquired influence among the neighbouring maritime states. To the writers of this nation, history is principally indebted for whatever information has been obtained of the eastern countries of India; but their narratives so abound in hyperbole, and they recount such extravagant stories, that credit must be denied to many of their assertions; whilst, at the same time, their writings furnish some accurate traits of the

genius and disposition of the people whom they describe. Even the accounts of Mendez de Pinto, the prince of fiction, although an intelligent traveller, will enable his readers to form an estimate of the importance and civilization of nations, which at a later period have, by many, been erroneously considered as in a condition bordering on wild barbarity.

From the testimony of Portuguese historians it appears, that in the middle of the 16th century, four powerful states divided amongst them the regions that lie between the south-east province of British India, Yunan in China, and the Eastern Sea: their territories extended from Cassay and Assam,* on the N. W. as far south-eastward as the island of Junkseylon. These nations were known to Europeans by the names of Arracan, Ava, Pegue, and Siam. Arracan, properly Yee-Kein, borders on the S. E. province of British India, and includes the sea-coast, with what is called the Broken Islands, as far south as Cape Negrais; Ava, the name of the ancient capital of the Birmans, has been usually accepted as the name of the country at large, which is Miamma. This empire is situated eastward of Arracan, from which it is divided by a ridge of lofty mountains, called by the natives Anou-pec-tou-miou, or the great western hilly country. On the N. W. it is separated from the kingdom of Cassay by the river Keen-duem; on the north it is bounded by mountains and petty independent principalities, that lie contiguous to Assam; on the north-east and east, it touches on China and North Siam; on the south

* There are some petty independent princes, whose lands intervene.

its limits have so often varied, that it is difficult to ascertain them with any precision. The city of Prome, or Pee, seems to be the original and natural boundary of the Birman empire, although conquest has since stretched its dominion several degrees farther south. Pegue, called by the natives Baggo, is the country southward of Ava, which occupies the sea-coast as far as Martaban, properly Mondimaa; Prome was its northern frontier, and Siam adjoined on the east. The kingdom of Siam, or Shaan, comprehended as far south as Junkseylon, east to Cambodia and Laos, and north to Dzemee (probably the Chiamee of Loubere), and Yunan in China. This nation calls itself Tai, and is further distinguished by the appellations Tai-yay, or Great Tai, and Tay-nay, or Little Tai. Their former capital was named Yoodia, ‡ or Yoodra; by De Pinto, Oodia; whence the Siamese are frequently, by the Birmans, denominated Yoodras. These boundaries, however, may be considered rather as the claim of each state, than its actual possession. Vicissitudes of victory and defeat alternately extended and contracted their dominions.

Pinto, and Faria de Souza, agree that the Birmans, though formerly subject to the king of Pegue, became afterwards masters of Ava, and caused a revolution in Pegue about the middle of the 16th century. Hamilton, a much more recent author, says that the kingdom of the Birmans extended from "Maravi," probably Mergui, near Tenasserem, to the province of Yunan in China, about 800 miles from north to south, and 250 from east to west. The Portuguese assisted the Birmans in

‡ Called Juthea by Europeans.

their wars against the Peguers, and, according to Pinto, performed prodigies of valour. The account of the capture of Martaban, ‡ and of the treasures found therein, far exceeds the limits of belief.

The Portuguese continued to exercise an influence in the Birman and Pegue countries, and a still greater in Arraçan, so long as they maintained an ascendancy over other European nations in the East; but on the seizure of their settlements and abridgment of their dominions by the Dutch, the consequence that had been deservedly annexed to the Portuguese name sunk into insignificance; and the Christian settlers degenerated into a contemptible race, distinguished only by their feebleness and vice. During the reign of Louis the XIVth several splendid attempts were made to propagate the doctrines of the Church of Rome, and advance the interests of the French nation, in the kingdom of Siam. Concerning these expeditions accounts of unquestionable fidelity have been published. Little, however, is related of Ava and Pegue, with whom, the Abbé Choisy says, "the king of Siam was constantly at war."

In the beginning of the 17th century, both the English and Dutch had obtained settlements in various quarters of the Birman dominions, which

‡ Speaking of the capture of Martaban, Pinto says, "During this siege, they of the city ate 3000 elephants. There were found 6000 pieces of artillery. As for gold, silver, precious stones and jewels, that were found there, one truly knows not what they were, for those things are ordinarily concealed; wherefore it shall suffice me to say, that so much as the king of Brama had of Chaimbainhan's treasure, amounted to an hundred millions of gold." The account of the feast of Tinagoojoo is ludicrously extravagant.

were afterwards forfeited by the misconduct of the latter; and Europeans of all nations were banished from Ava. The English, many years subsequent to this expulsion, were reinstated in their factories at Syriam and Ava, where they appear to have traded, rather in the capacity of private merchants, than on the part of the India Company, in whose service they were not regularly enrolled. The island of Negrais was likewise taken possession of by the English, and a survey made of it by one Weldon, in the year 1687. On this island the government of Fort St George established a settlement. Little benefit, however, seems to have been derived from the acquisition: the affairs of the India Company, and indeed of the nation, were in too precarious a state, in another quarter of Asia, to admit of sparing the supplies of men and money requisite for its effectual support.

The supremacy of the Birmans over the Peguers continued throughout the last, and during the first forty years of the present century, when the Peguers in the provinces of Dalla, Martaban, Tongo, and Prome, revolted; a civil war ensued, which was prosecuted on both sides with savage ferocity. In the year 1744, the British factory at Syriam was destroyed by the contending parties, and the views of commerce were suspended by precautions of personal security. Success long continued doubtful: at length the Peguers, by the aid of arms procured from Europeans trading to their ports, and with the assistance of some renegade Dutch and native Portuguese, gained several victories over the Birmans, in the years 1750 and 1751. These advantages they pursued with so much vigour that, early in the year 1752, the capital of

Ava was invested. The Birmans, disheartened by repeated defeats, after a short siege, surrendered at discretion. Dweepdee, the last of a long line of Birman kings, was made prisoner with all his family, except two sons, who effected their escape to the Siamese; and from whom they found a friendly reception, and were flattered with assurances of security and succour.

Bonna Della, or Beinga Della, king of Pegue, when he had completed the conquest of Ava, returned to his own country, leaving his brother Apporaza to govern the late capital of the Birman king, whom he carried with him a prisoner to Pegue; enjoining his brother to reduce the refractory, displace suspected persons, and exact an oath of allegiance from such Birmans as should be suffered to retain their former possessions.

Matters at first bore the appearance of tranquillity and submission: the landholders and principal inhabitants of the country around Ava, acknowledged themselves vassals of the conqueror, and accepted the prescribed oath. Alompra, a Birman of low extraction, then known by the humble name of Aumdzea (signifying huntsman), was continued by the conqueror in the chiefship of Monchaboo, at that time an inconsiderable village, about 12 miles from the river, west of Keoummeoum. This man, who possessed a spirit of enterprise and boldness equal to the most arduous undertakings, at first, like many others, dissembled the reluctance he felt at the imposition of a foreign yoke, and submitted to the necessity of fortune; but, unlike others, he harboured hopes of emancipation, and meditated on the best means of accomplishing his future purpose.

Soon after the Pegue king had reached his capital, he caused a general proclamation to be issued, in terms of insolent triumph, announcing to all nations of the earth, that the Birman king was become his prisoner; that the Birman country, being subdued by the prowess of his arms, was annexed, as a conquered province, to the Pegue monarchy; and that the city of Pegue was in future to be considered as the general metropolis. This proclamation, as might be expected, increased the hatred of the Birmans, and stimulated their desire of revenge. Alompra had at this time, in the town and neighbourhood of Monchaboo, 100 devoted followers, on whose courage and fidelity he could safely rely; he had strengthened and repaired the stockade that surrounded the town,† without awaking any suspicion in the minds of the Peguers, who never dreamt that a person so inconsiderable would attempt an act of rebellion under the check of a numerous garrison, distant only 15 leagues. Their attention was directed to remoter provinces; and occupied by the fears they entertained, lest the sons of Dweepdee should return in force to recover the possessions of their dethroned father.

Thus resting in imaginary security, there were not more than 50 Pegue soldiers in Monchaboo, who, on all occasions, treated the Birmans with contemptuous arrogance. Alompra, availing himself of the resentment excited by some particular act of indignity, roused his already well-prepared ad-

† Almost all towns, and even villages, in the Birman country, are surrounded by a stockade, in like manner as the villages in the Carnatic are inclosed by a bound hedge. The Birmans are very expert in erecting this kind of defence.

herents to active resistance, and, attacking the Peguers with irresistible violence, put every man of that nation to the sword.

Alompra, after this act of open rebellion, still dissembling his real intention, and with a view to gain time, wrote to Apporaza in terms of the utmost humility, expressing much contrition for what had happened, representing it as a sudden gust of intemperate violence arising from mutual irritation; at the same time, lavishly professing his attachment and fidelity to the Pegue government. These assurances, though they could not be expected to procure an unconditional pardon, yet had the desired effect, of rendering the Pegue governor less alert in preparation to reduce him; and so far was Alompra from being considered in a formidable point of view, that Apporaza, having urgent business at Pegue, left Ava under the government of his nephew Dotachew, with directions to keep Alompra in strict confinement, as soon as he should be brought from Monchaboo, to which place a force, that was thought equal to the service, had been detached, on hearing of the massacre of the Peguers.

Approaching the fort of Monchaboo, the Peguers never dreamed of meeting resistance, and had come ill armed and equipped for encountering opposition; but they found the gates of the stockade shut against them, and heard threats of defiance, instead of supplications for clemency. Alompra did not give them leisure to recover from their surprise. At day-break the next morning he sallied forth at the head of his hundred adherents, and, attacking the Peguers furiously with spears and swords, routed and pursued them for two

miles. After this exploit he returned to his little fortress, and lost no time in preparing for a yet more hazardous contest. He represented to his people, that they must now resolve to conquer or perish; and he invited the Birmans of neighbouring towns to enrol themselves under his standard. Some obeyed the summons, but many were cautious of embracing his yet desperate fortune. In this affair, the number of Peguers defeated by Alompra is estimated at one thousand.

News of this disaster reaching Dotachew at Ava, he seems to have acted with the most blameable irresolution; undecided what measure to adopt, whether to march in person at the head of his troops, which did not exceed three thousand, to wait until a reinforcement should arrive, or to retreat to Prome. Whilst he was thus deliberating, reports were daily received of some accession to the force of the adventurer, which, though in part true, were greatly exaggerated by the general consternation that prevailed throughout the city. Alompra had certain intelligence of the state of his interests in every quarter; and determined, by advancing boldly to Ava, to strike a decisive blow, before the fears of the enemy had subsided, and without giving time to recal the numerous detachments of Peguers that were scattered over the neighbouring provinces. The prudence and promptitude of this measure met with all the success it merited. Dotachew, when he heard of Alompra's intention, fled from Ava, whilst the Birmans in that city rose on the few Peguers that either could not, or did not choose to accompany their leader; all of whom they put to death. Alompra, finding that Dotachew had retreated, altered his first reso-

lution of proceeding in person to Ava, and remained at Monchaboo, sending his second son Shembuan, to take possession of the city, and garrison the fort.

These events appear to have taken place about the autumn of the year 1753. Dotachew did not halt until he reached Pegue. The misfortunes of the Peguers in the remote provinces alarmed Beinga Della, their king, for the safety of his own territories, and particularly for the northern towns and districts of Prome, Keounzeik, Tambouterra, &c. where the Birmans considerably outnumbered the Peguers. A large force was, notwithstanding, collected at Syriam, the command of which was given to Apporaza, who, in the month of January 1754, sailed up the Irrawaddy, with a numerous fleet of war boats, to reduce the insurgents. At this time both the English and French nations had reestablished their factories at Syriam, and, of course, had their separate interests. The French favoured the Peguers, whilst the English leaned to the Birmans; but until the vicinity of their residence again became the seat of war, neither engaged in open hostility: their partialities were manifested by petty assistance lent in secret, and supplies clandestinely conveyed, probably more with a view to private emolument, than from any enlarged political consideration.

When the English last took possession of Negrais, about the year 1751, their affairs were not conducted with prudence. A Mr Hunter was appointed to the superintendence, who is represented as a man of capacity, but of an unconciliating and perverse disposition. The settlement, under his

guidance, continued in a state of unceasing ferment. The Caffre slaves, who had been introduced for the purpose of cultivating the lands, rose upon their masters, and, seizing on the boats belonging to the island, effected their escape. When Mr Hunter died, he was succeeded by the person next in rank, under whose auspices the interests of the infant colony did not improve. In addition to their difficulties, the new settlers became unhealthy. These discouragements, however, did not induce them to evacuate the place; but their exertions were rendered languid by the diminished probability of ultimate success.

The season when Apporaza undertook his expedition to reduce Alompra, was the most unfavourable for making a speedy journey. During the dry months of January, February, March and April, the waters of the Irrawaddy subside into a stream that is barely navigable; * frequent shoals and banks of sand retard boats of burthen, and a northerly wind invariably prevails. These obstructions, whilst they delayed the Peguers, gave opportunity to their enemies to collect the whole of their force, and arrange it in the most advantageous manner, to avert the impending danger.

The progress of Apporaza was uninterrupted until he approached the city of Ava, in the neighbourhood of which small parties of Birmans from the adjacent banks molested the boats of the Pe-

* The Ganges, at the same season of the year, experiences a like reduction of its waters. The head of the Hoogly river continues shut for some months, during which, boats, to reach the Ganges from Calcutta, are obliged to navigate through the Sunderbunds, and afterwards surmount the stream with difficulty, owing to the impediments of numerous shallows and sand-banks.

guers by desultory attacks; they, however, did not much impede the fleet, which continued to advance. Approaching the fort, a summons was sent from the Pegue general to Shembuan, with a promise to spare his life, provided he immediately surrendered, and threatening exemplary vengeance should he refuse.

The fort of ancient Ava was of sufficient strength to maintain a protracted siege against an enemy inexpert in war; and Apporaza had good reason to suppose that resolution would not be wanting in the besieged. Shembuan replied, that he would defend his post to the last extremity.

In the meanwhile Alompra was unremitting in his preparations to receive the enemy, he had collected a considerable fleet at Keoum-meoum, and his army was recruited to the computed number of ten thousand, whose confidence increased on the approach of danger; whilst, on the contrary, the troops of Apporaza were disheartened by the accounts of the valour and strength of their foes. The Pegue commander, therefore, judged it more prudent to lead them at once to battle, than to waste time in the operations of a siege, the termination of which seemed precarious and remote.

With this design he left Ava in his rear, and proceeded with his whole force towards Keoum-meoum, where he found Alompra prepared to give him battle: an engagement ensued; the contest was chiefly confined to the fleets, whilst small parties of either army skirmished on shore. The action is said to have been obstinate and bloody. At length the Peguers, on a report being spread that Shembuan had left the fort of Ava, and was advancing to attack their rear, gave way, and fled

with precipitation. Numbers were slaughtered in the retreat; and Shembuan, issuing from the fort of Ava, completed their overthrow. Alompra pursued the fugitive Peguers as far as the city of Sembew-Ghewn, after which he returned to Monchaboo. Apporaza, with the remains of his army, retired to the province of Pegue.

The power of the Peguers now seemed hastening to its wane. Yet, notwithstanding the recent check they had received, fresh preparations were made to prosecute the war. At this time, either real or pretended caution impelled them to a measure, not less repugnant to humanity, than, as the event proved, injurious to their own interests. It was alleged, that a conspiracy had been formed against the Pegue government, by their aged prisoner, the dethroned monarch of the Birmans, which had been discovered when on the point of execution. All the principal men of the Birman nation were supposed to be confederated in the plot; and little formality was used to ascertain whether the accusation was true or false. On the 13th of October the Peguers rose, and, having first slain the unhappy monarch, slaughtered indiscriminately several hundred Birmans, sparing neither age nor sex. These sanguinary acts were as cruelly retaliated. The Birmans, though subdued, were still very numerous in the towns and districts of Prome, Keounzeik, Loonzay, and Denoobew. Exasperated at the murder of their monarch, and the fate of their brethren, they flew to arms, and, with a barbarity nothing inferior to that which had been exercised by the Peguers, exacted a severe retribution. Prome, Denoobew, Loonzay, &c. changed

masters, and their garrisons fell the victims of revenge.

During these transactions, the Birman adventurer was sedulously employed in improving his good fortune. The eldest son of the late deposed and murdered king, hearing that Alompra had raised the standard of revolt, returned to Monchaboo, and, with a set of brave and attached people, called Quois, that inhabited an eastern province of the empire, joined the fortunes of the adventurer. This young man, intoxicated by the successes of his party, had the imprudence to assume the distinctions of royalty, and attempt to exercise sovereign sway, as his hereditary right. Such claims, however, were wholly incompatible with the views of the ambitious chief, whose opposition soon convinced the prince, not only of the futility of his hopes, but likewise that, having harboured them, his own person was no longer secure. He therefore secretly withdrew, and again sought an asylum among the Siamese. This step so enraged Alompra, that, under pretence of a conspiracy, he caused near a thousand of the Quois to be put to death.

These events occupied the greater part of the year 1754, which was drawing to a close, when Beinga Della, having made fresh levies, marched from Pegue, accompanied by his brother, to retrieve the late disgraceful defeats. The king proceeded with all expedition towards Denoobew and Loonzay. The Birmans, on his approach, evacuated those towns, and fled. The Peguers then advanced to Prome, a city well defended by a solid wall, a deep fosse, and a strong stockade. In this fortress the Birmans prepared to make a resolute

defence, and wrote to Alompra to acquaint him of their situation, entreating him, at the same time, to come to their aid with all possible despatch. Beinga Della drove in the straggling Birmans that defended the banks of the river; a general assault followed, which was vigorously repulsed by the besieged. The Peguers then altered the mode of attack into a blockade; and, finding that the garrison could only act on the defensive, Beinga Della despatched part of his fleet and army up the river, as far as Melloon, in order to cut off supplies from the northward, and afford his own people more convenient subsistence.

Alompra, although at this time threatened with an attack from the fugitive prince, and the exasperated Quois, on receiving intelligence of the blockade of Prome, immediately detached Meinlaw Tzezo, an officer of distinction, with 36 war boats, to the assistance of the garrison. This general, notwithstanding his force was far inferior to that of the enemy, boldly engaged the advanced guard at Melloon, and drove them back to Prome; but, finding himself unequal to contend openly against the main body of the Peguers, he threw himself, by a skilful manœuvre, with a considerable supply of men and provisions, into the fort; a few of his boats only falling into the hands of the enemy, whilst the remainder effected their retreat to a place of security.

Forty days are said to have elapsed, without any material advantage on the part of the besiegers. The danger being past that threatened from the eastward, Alompra had, during this interval, collected the choicest of his troops, and, leaving the care of Monchaboo and Ava to his two eldest sons,

proceeded down the river at the head of a formidable fleet, with a rapidity that equally tended to impress the enemy with dread, and inspire his own soldiers with confidence. The attack was not delayed beyond the hour of his arrival; the Peguers were quickly driven from a stockade which they had erected on the north side of the fort; but the hottest action took place between the fleets. Instead of an ineffectual fire from ill-directed musketry, the boats closed, and the highest personal prowess was evinced on both sides; knives, spears, and swords, were their weapons. After a long and bloody contest, victory declared for the Birmans, whilst the vanquished Peguers sought safety in a precipitate flight.

Alompra, who never failed diligently to improve his advantages, suffered no time to be lost in inaction. Proceeding to Loonzay, he found the town evacuated, and, on taking possession, changed its name to Mayah-oun, signifying rapid conquest, by which it is at present known; and such was the terror of his arms, that a body of his troops advanced within a few leagues of Persiam, or Bassien, unmolested by the enemy, who did not attempt even to retard their progress.

The report of this disaster spread general consternation throughout the Pegue dominions; the fugitives that escaped gave such accounts, as the facts, exaggerated by their fears, might be supposed to dictate; a general insurrection of all the Birman subjects subordinate to the Pegue government was apprehended; and certain information of plots and conspiracies proved that these fears were not groundless. The Pegue king, who had retreated to Bassien, left that place by night, and

retired to Pegue; his adherents, thus abandoned and terrified, thought of nothing but their own security; every man pursued what he judged the safest track; and so universal was the panic, that, on the 17th of February, the town and fort of Persaim were completely deserted, the fugitives having first set fire to several houses, and consumed the public store-rooms, in which was deposited a large quantity of grain.

On the morning of the 23d, an advanced party of the Birman fleet came in sight; shortly after, a body of about 250 men landed, and marched up to a small factory ‡ occupied by the English. These people were well armed, according to the country manner; but, not appearing to entertain hostile intentions against any except the Peguers, the English superintendant, Captain Baker, received them with confidence, and, in the character of a peaceable trader, solicited protection for the servants and property of the India Company. His request was granted; neither depredation nor insult were offered to the English. About noon the Birmans departed, having first set fire to what remained of the town, and destroyed part of the stockade. They directed their route back to Kioukhoun, a town situated on the mouth of that branch of the great river that leads to Bassien and Negrais.

From this time until the 12th of March, frequent skirmishes took place between small parties of the Birmans and Peguers, in which the latter were generally worsted. An ineffectual at-

‡ This factory, under the control of the resident at Negrais, consisted of a few store-houses, erected near the river, for the purpose of facilitating the timber trade.

tempt was made to repossess and defend Bassien by the late chekey, or lieutenant, the man who had been second in authority whilst the place was subject to the Pegue government.

The seat of war was now likely to be confined to the mouths of navigable rivers, and the numerous creeks and canals that intersect the lower provinces of Pegue, and communicate between the larger streams. A vessel of burthen, provided with guns, and worked by a few Europeans, became a formidable foe to the open-war boats of the natives, though well manned, and conducted with skill and courage. Alompra, who was at this time at Loonzay, or Mayah-oun, formed a right estimation of the advantage to be derived from an alliance with nations so well versed in the arts of maritime war. In order, therefore, to engage the good offices of the English, or at least stipulate for their neutrality, he sent a deputation to Mr Brooke, resident at Negrais, and at that time chief of all the English factories.

On the 13th of March, a fleet of twenty-five Birman boats arrived at Bassien, having on board two Birman deputies, accompanied by an Armenian and a Mussulman as interpreters. These personages brought a letter from Alompra, directed to Mr Brooke, couched in terms of friendship; but, not deeming it prudent to venture with so small a force through the Pegue districts to Negrais, the English superintendant undertook to forward a copy of the letter, whilst the deputies returned to a secure post up the river, at no great distance from Bassien, there to wait an answer, which was expected in four or five days.

At the expiration of the computed time, the schooner that had been despatched to Negrais returned, bringing an order from Mr Brooke to Captain Baker, to accompany the deputies to Negrais, and to repair thither as speedily as possible. The deputation accordingly left Bassien on the 19th of March 1755, and reached Negrais on the 22d, at night.

The business of the deputies was not concluded until the 26th, when, having received an answer to Alompra's letter, and their final dismission, they departed, attended by Captain Baker. Approaching Bassien, they were astonished to find the place in the hands of the enemy. A detachment of 3000 Peguers, in 60 war-boats, had arrived during their absence; and on the 26th, engaged and captured all the boats that waited to convoy the deputies to their master. Captain Baker, finding it impracticable to proceed, conducted the deputies back to Negrais, where they returned on the 3d of April, proposing to wait the occurrence of some more favourable opportunity.

The impediments that had thus prevented the return of the deputies were of short duration. On the 21st of April 1755, the Peguers received certain intelligence that Alompra had attacked Apporaza, in his camp at Synyangong, and that their countrymen had suffered a total defeat. Their own numbers being greatly diminished by desertion, Bassien became no longer a place of safety. They judged it therefore most prudent to withdraw towards Syriam. On the 23d, the ruins of the town, and its vicinity, were completely evacuated, and the navigation of the river again opened to the Birmans.

The retreat of these troops was well timed.

Several detached parties of Birmans appeared on the subsequent days ; and, on the 28th, a body of 1000 men arrived at Bassien, a small number by land, the rest by water, with 40 war-boats. They experienced no resistance, and made a few prisoners. A strong convoy was sent down to Negrais to escort the deputies, who now pursued their journey without molestation. They returned on the 3d of June to Bassien, and left it on the 5th, with a letter from the resident at Negrais to Alompra, who had reached Dagon * early in the preceding month.

The victory gained by Alompra at Synyangong, in the end of April, was decisive; the Peguers, disheartened, fled to Syriam; and many did not halt until they reached Pegue. Among the latter was Apporaza, who left the defence of Syriam to a relation of the king of Pegue. The fortifications consisted of a feeble rampart, protected by a palisade, and an inconsiderable fosse, almost dry. Light as such obstacles would appear to regular troops, they presented a formidable opposition to the desultory attacks of an undisciplined rabble.

The French and English factories at Syriam were at this time in a state of rivalry, such as might be expected from the spirit of national emulation, and the avidity of traders on a narrow scale : the situation of both became at this juncture highly critical ; danger approached, from which they could not hope to be entirely exempt. It was not to be expected that they would be suffered to remain in neutral tranquillity, indifferent spectators of so se-

* Now called Rangoon. Dagon is the name of a celebrated temple, a short distance from the present city.

·ious a contest: it therefore became necessary to adopt some decided line of conduct, in order to avoid being considered as a common enemy, whilst the contending powers seemed equally anxious to attach them. In this difficult situation neither the French nor the English seem to have acted with policy or candour; and the imprudence of certain individuals finally involved others, as well as themselves, in fatal consequences.

Monsieur Bourno, the chief of the French factory, in the interest of the Peguers, but apprehensive of the power, and dreading the success of the Birmans, had recourse to dissimulation, and endeavoured to steer a middle course. Under pretence of occupying a station where he could more effectually aid the Peguers, he embarked on board a French ship, and, with two other vessels belonging to his nation, dropped down from Syriam, and moored in the stream of the Rangoon river. Finding, soon after, that Alompra was likely to be victorious, he determined, if possible, to secure an interest in that quarter. With this intent, he quitted his ship, accompanied by two of his countrymen, and proceeded in a boat to Dagon, where Alompra received him with marks of distinction and kindness; but, on the second day after the departure of Monsieur Bourno, the officer whom he left in charge of the ship during his absence in concert with a missionary who had long resided at the factory, either impelled by fear, or prevailed upon by some secret influence, weighed anchor suddenly, and returned to the Peguers at Syriam, without permission from his commander, or even advising him of his intention.

So extraordinary a step surprised Alompra ex-

ceedingly; he taxed Bourno with deceit; the Frenchman protested his own innocence, and argued the improbability of his assenting to any such measure whilst he remained in the Birman camp. He sent an order to his officers to return immediately; an injunction that was disregarded by them, under plea of their commander being a prisoner. He then requested leave from Alompra to go in person, and bring back the ship; to this the king consented, on condition of leaving one of his attendants (Lavine, a youth) as an hostage for his certain return.

From the procedure of Mr Brooke, resident at Negrais, in his reception of the Birman deputies, and the aid of military stores sent by him to the Birmans, the English, when it became necessary to avow the side they meant to espouse, seem to have declared explicitly for the Birmans; and this principle was adopted not only by the resident at Negrais, but also by the factory at Syriam. The Hunter schooner, belonging to the India Company, the Elizabeth, a country ship, commanded by Captain Swain, and two other vessels, left Syriam in the month of May, and joined the Birmans at Dagon. In the beginning of June, the Company's snow, Arcot, bound to Negrais, commanded by a Captain Jackson, and having on board Mr Whitehill, a gentleman in the service of the East India Company, proceeding to Negrais in an official capacity, put into the Rangoon river, through stress of weather. A boat that had been sent into fetch a pilot returned, with an account of the state of affairs; and brought a letter, and an invitation from Alompra to Captain Jackson, to carry his

vessel up to Dagon, promising him every aid that the place afforded.

On the 6th of June the Arcot reached Dagon, and Mr Whitehill went on shore to pay his respects to the Birman king, by whom he was received in a manner that gave no apparent cause for complaint.

After the defeat of the Peguers at Synyangong, and the acquisition of Dagon by Alompra, the English ships sailed from Syriam voluntarily, and came to Dagon to assist the Birmans, in conformity to the evident determination of Mr Brooke, whose reception of the Birman deputies. together with his subsequent conduct, clearly evinced his friendly intentions towards that nation. Until the arrival of the "Arcot, with Mr Jackson and Mr Whitehill, no subject of offence seems to have been given to the English by the Birmans.

A short time previous to the arrival of the Arcot, Apporaza returned from Pegue to Syriam, and reassumed the command. He had been made acquainted with the negotiation carrying on between Mr Brooke at Negrais and the deputies of Alompra; and, in order to counteract its effects, commenced a secret correspondence with Captain Jackson. His arguments seem to have strongly influenced that gentleman, and given a decided bias in his favour. Ground of accusation was soon found against the Birmans; personal ill treatment was heavily complained of, which the tenor of Mr Jackson's despatches does not satisfactorily establish.

An attempt was shortly after made by the Peguers to surprise the Birman camp, and recover

Dagon. Notwithstanding the land forces marched by night, and the fleet advanced with celerity, increased by a rapid tide, they were discovered in time for the Birmans to prepare for their reception. The boats first arriving, were repulsed by a heavy fire from the banks, which were lined with Birman troops. The post of Dagon could only be taken on the side of the land by a resolute assault. The attack of the Peguers was feeble and ineffectual. Disheartened by the failure of their fleet, and destitute of able leaders, they soon abandoned their enterprise. An irregular fire of musketry continued until noon, when the Peguers retreated to Syriam, little loss being sustained on either side.

During this spiritless contest the English maintained a perfect neutrality, not a shot being discharged from any of the ships ; a circumstance that tended to create suspicion in the minds of the Birmans. Their distrust, however, seems to have been lulled by assurances of friendship, and probably by the expectation of a supply of cannon and stores from Negrais, which Mr Brooke had announced his intention of sending under care of Messrs Baker and North, whom he meant to depute to the Birman king. Alompra had, a short time before, left Dagon to quell a disturbance in the northern provinces, caused by the Quois and Siamese ; who, taking advantage of his absence, had invaded his country, and excited an insurrection of the inhabitants in favour of the fugitive son of the ancient monarch. The sudden appearance of the victorious chief disconcerted his enemies ; he soon reduced the disobedient, and obliged the Siamese to retire within their own frontiers.

Previous to his departure from Dagon, Alompra

laid the foundation of the town, now so well known by the name of Rangoon, or Dzangoon, which signifies victory achieved. Here stood, in former days, a large and populous city, called in the Pali, or sacred language, Singpounterra; the site of which Alompra diligently explored, and raised on its ruins the present flourishing sea-port of the Pegue dominions. Dagon, often called Sho Dagon, or the Golden Dagon, is a name peculiar to the temple; a noble edifice, three miles distant from the banks of the river. When Alompra left his camp, he appointed Meinla-Meingoun, an officer of approved reputation and valour, to command in his absence.

The clandestine negotiations between the English and Peguers appear to have been renewed after this action. Several messages passed, in which a fresh attack on the Birmans was concerted, and the aid of the Company's ships promised to the Peguers, who were thus to be befriended by the whole European force, both French and English. Confiding in their new allies, and assured of victory, the war-boats of the Peguers, during the night, dropped down the Pegue river, and with the French ships moored in the stream of the Irrawaddy,* waiting the return of tide to carry them to Rangoon. Dawn of day discovered them to the Birmans, whose general immediately sent for the English gentlemen, to consult on the best means of defence. At this interview, the Birmans candidly acquainted Mr. Whitehill how ill satisfied they were with the conduct of the English commanders du-

* The name of the great river of Ava. This branch is often called the Rangoon river, to distinguish it from that which leads to Bassien.

ring the late action, and desired a promise of more active assistance on the present occasion. Mr Whitehill replied, that without the Company's orders he was not authorized to commence hostilities on any nation; but if the Peguers fired on the English ships, it would be considered as an act of aggression, and resented accordingly. How much it is to be lamented, that such prudent and equitable principles were not better observed! the departure from them affixed a stain on the national honour, which the lapse of more than forty years has not been able to expunge.

The Pegue force was, on this occasion, highly formidable. It consisted of two large French ships, and an armed snow belonging to the king of Pegue, with 200 Teilee, or war-boats. On the approach of this armament, the Birmans manifested their apprehensions, by repeating their entreaties to the English. Owing to the time of the tide, it was noon before the Pegue boats could advance. When within cannon shot, the French ships came to anchor, and opened their guns, whilst a brisk discharge of musketry was poured from the Pegue boats on the Birman fleet, that, for the most part, had taken shelter in a creek, and were protected by the fire kept up from a grove of mangoo trees, on the banks of the river, in possession of the Birmans, around which they had raised temporary works, and erected a battery of a few pieces of ship cannon, which, from being ill served, did little execution. At this juncture, the English ships Hunter, Arcot and Elizabeth, commenced a fire on the Birman fleet. Thus assailed by unexpected foes, the Birmans were obliged to abandon their boats, and take shelter in the grove. Had the Pe-

guers improved the critical opportunity, and pursued their advantage with resolution, this action might have retrieved their declining interests, and restored to them possession of the lower provinces. In vain the Europeans persuaded them to attempt the capture of the Birman fleet. Too timid to expose themselves to a close discharge of musketry from the grove, they were contented with the eclat of having compelled the enemy to retreat from their boats, and the rest of the day was spent in distant random firing. During the night the English ships removed out of the reach of small arms, two men being killed on board the Arcot. The Peguers kept their situation for some days, during which much irregular skirmishing passed; when, having exhausted their amunition without advancing their cause, the Peguers thought fit to return to Syriam, accompanied by the English and French ships, leaving the Birmans in possession of the fortified grove, and the lines of the newly-projected town.

Apporaza, who held the chief command at Syriam, received the English with every mark of respect; and, judging this a favourable opportunity to regain the alliance of their nation, he wrote to Mr Brooke at Negrais, inviting him to come in person to Syriam, and there settle terms of permanent connexion. Mr Brooke, in letters of a friendly tenor, excused himself from personal attendance, and requested that Mr Whitehill might be suffered to proceed to his station at Negrais, and the Company's ships permitted to pursue their voyage to the same place, whither he ordered the several commanders immediately to repair. The compliance of Apporaza with this request demon-

strated his ardent desire to recover the good will of the English. Mr Whitehill left Syriam, escorted by 20 armed boats, and, proceeding through the rivers, reached Negrais on the 26th of August. The Hunter schooner sailed on the 26th of September following, the Arcot being delayed for some necessary repairs.

Whilst these matters were agitating at Dagon, Mr Brooke was advancing his negociations with Alompra. Captain Baker and Lieutenant North were delegated, with presents and instructions, to conclude a treaty of amity and alliance with the Birman monarch.

It has been already mentioned, that Alompra was under the necessity of leaving his post at Dagon about the middle of June, in order to suppress an insurrection of his own subjects, and repel the Siamese. The object of his expedition was attained with little difficulty; and he had the additional satisfaction to learn, that his arms had been successful in Cassay, the inhabitants of which, taking advantage of the unsettled state of the empire, had thrown off their dependence. This country is separated from the kingdom of the Birmans on the north-west by the river Keenduem, which, taking a south-east course, unites its waters with those of the Irrawaddy, a short way above the town of Sembew-ghewn. About the time that Alompra left Ava to relieve Prome, he detached a body of troops across the river, under the command of a distant relation, to chastise the Cassayers. These people had, for ages past, tasted the sweets of independence only at intervals, when the contests of the Birman and Pegue powers left them no leisure to enforce obedience. Thus ac-

customed to the yoke, though always ready for revolt, they were quickly reduced to submission. The prince, or rajah, who resided at Munnepoora, the capital of Cassay, sued for peace, which was concluded on terms advantageous to the Birmans; and, as is the custom, a young man and young woman of the kindred of the rajah were delivered as hostages for the due observance of the compact.

The English deputation proceeded in boats slowly up the river, which, at that season of the year, is swelled by mountain torrents, and the navigation rendered difficult by the rapidity of the stream. A short distance above Prome, they met a detachment, commanded by a Boomien, or general of rank, in its route to Dagon; it consisted of eighty boats, and 4000 troops, to reinforce the army acting against the Peguers. Captain Baker had an interview with the chief, who expressed sanguine hopes of reducing Syriam, and destroying the French ships that had assisted the Peguers.

The late extraordinary conduct of the English shipping at Dagon, was no very favourable introduction to the delegates; nor did Captain Baker escape reproach for transactions in which he certainly had no share. To increase his embarrassment, he had the misfortune, the day after he parted with the detachment, to lose his colleague, Lieutenant North, who died at Roung-Yooah, of a dysentery and fever. Captain Baker afterwards pursued his voyage, accompanied only by the Birmans. On the 8th of September he reached Ava, lately the metropolis of the empire. Alompra, partial to the scene of his first success, had removed the seat of government to Monchaboo, which he constituted his capital, and fixed on as the place

of his future residence. At Ava Captain Baker was civilly entertained by the governor. On the 12th he reached Keoum-meoum, situated on the west bank of the Irrawaddy, and on the 16th received a summons to attend "the golden feet." * Leaving his boats, at noon the following day he proceeded by land to the royal presence. His reception was conducted with as much pomp and parade, as a king so recently elevated to his honours, and seated on a throne so imperfectly established, was capable of displaying. During this interview the new monarch, in his conversation, gave a striking instance of that intoxication which usually attends an unexpected and recent rise to power. Yet his vain boastings were not accompanied by any mark of personal contempt or indignity to Captain Baker. He vaunted of his victories, and the extent of his empire, in a style of presumptuous vanity equal to the arrogance of Xerxes. He upbraided our national character in the affair of the shipping at Dagon, alleging that he had treated the English with kindness, which they repaid by perfidiously breaking the promise given to him on his departure from Dagon. To these reproaches Captain Baker could only reply by expressions of regret, and a solemn declaration that Mr Brooke, so far from having authorized, knew nothing of such proceedings. Alompra listened to his assurances with more complacency than could well be expected from a despot who had waded to a throne through the blood of his enemies.

* A Birman expression, used to denote the Imperial presence.

At a second audience, a few days subsequent to the first, his Majesty dictated a letter, addressed to Mr Brooke, in which he granted permission to the Company to establish factories at Dagon and Bassien; having determined on the total demolition of Syriam. Captain Baker made a further requisition of the island of Negrais. Although this desire was not refused, the formal assignment was postponed, owing to a domestic misfortune, which gave the king much uneasiness; but as it was his Majesty's intention shortly to repair to Rangoon, to conduct in person the Pegue war, the completion of the grant was deferred to a future opportunity. Captain Baker, having obtained his dismission, set out for Keoum-meoum, and on the 29th of September embarked to return to Negrais.

Whilst friendship and union were thus likely to be established between the Birmans and the settlement at Negrais, the Peguers hazarded another attempt on the Birman post at Dagon, and were again assisted by the Arcot, and two private English ships, which, it is probable, on this occasion might have acted, in some degree, under compulsatory influence. Three English and one French ship, with 800 armed boats, constituted the Pegue force by water; and 10,000 men marched by land, to attack the heights at Dagon, and the fortified grove. The Birmans, with considerable ingenuity, constructed fire-rafts, consisting of a number of boats fastened together, and filled with combustible materials. These rafts were floated down a strong spring-tide to where the ships lay at anchor, and directed with such skill and effect, as to oblige them to slip their cables and get under

weigh, the French ship narrowly escaping destruction. This manœuvre effectually removed the vessels for that tide, and prevented a cooperation with the land forces, who, thus deprived of the support on which they chiefly depended, made an ineffectual charge on the Birman works. They were easily repulsed, and, with the fleet and army, retreated to Syriam, whence they never dared to hazard another enterprise.

The affairs of the Peguers were in this desperate state when Alompra returned victorious from Ava. His presence animated his own army, and spread a heavier cloud over the unfortunate Taliens.* He immediately changed the plan of operations. Instead of waiting at Dagon, in fortified posts, the attack of the Peguers, he, in turn, became the assailant, and leaving the great river, boldly advanced his boats to the mouth of the Syriam stream; thereby cutting off all communication with the sea, and the countries to the west of Rangoon. Apporaza about this time retired from Syriam to Pegue, leaving his former station to be maintained by the chief Woon, or Woongee, of the Pegue empire. Permission had previously been given to the English ships to depart with the Company's stores. Mons. Bourno, the French resident, continued at Syriam, where, having moored his vessel close to the factory, he prepared to defend himself. The tide in the Rangoon river rises to an uncommon height; the river of Pegue, or, as it is often called, of Syriam, being fed by the influx of the sea, through the Rangoon river, sinks at low ebb into an inconsiderable stream. The French

* The Birmans call the Peguers Taliens.

ship, when the water retired, touched the ground, whilst the Birmans, profiting by her unmanageable, state, during the recess of tide, brought gun-boats to bear in such a direction, as to annoy her without exposing themselves. This judicious mode of attack proved successful; the ship was quickly disabled, and Mons. Bourno, finding the post untenable, wrote a letter to Alompra, apologizing for his former conduct, and making fresh overtures of accommodation. The correspondence was either discovered or suspected by the Peguers, who suddenly removed Mons. Bourno and his adherents into the fort of Syriam, before the purposed negociation had time to be completed.

Alompra immediately took possession of the evacuated factory and vessel; after which he seemed desirous of attaining his object of Syriam, rather by blockade and famine than by hostile approaches. Without attempting to assault the place, he continued in its vicinity until the month of July 1756. By such apparent inactivity on the part of the Birmans, the garrison was lulled into fatal security. Alompra, seizing a favourable opportunity, crossed the ditch in the dead of the night, carried the outworks without resistance, and soon made himself master of the fort. The commandant, and the greater part of the garrison, favoured by the darkness, escaped to Pegue; many, however, were slain, and all the Europeans were made prisoners.

It has already appeared to have been the determined policy of the French to espouse the cause of the Peguers; and had succours from Pondicherry arrived before the state of things became too desperate, affairs would probably have worn

a different aspect, and the Peguers obtained such an addition to their strength, as would have enabled them to conclude a peace on advantageous terms. But assistance in war, to be effectual, must be timely. Unless applied while the scales hang nearly even, it often comes too late, and is found, not only to be useless, but even productive of deeper disappointment. In the present case, the French brought those supplies, of which the Peguers had long buoyed themselves with hopes, at the unfortunate moment when the communication was cut off, when no relief could be conveyed to them, and all prospect of retrieving their disastrous fortunes had completely vanished.

Mons. Dupliex, Governor of Pondicherry, a man whose comprehensive mind perceived with clearness whatever could benefit his nation, at this juncture deeply engaged in the important contest that was ultimately to determine the sovereignty of the East, being aware of the consequence of maintaining an influence in Pegue, had, notwithstanding the exigencies of his own situation equipped two ships, the Galathié and Diligent, vessels of force, well manned and armed, and sent them, with a supply of military stores, to the assistance of the Peguers. Shortly after leaving Pondicherry, they separated: the Galathié had a speedy passage; but owing to a fatal and frequent error of mistaking the mouth of the Sitang river, which is a few miles to the eastward, for that of Rangoon, she did not arrive at the bar until two days after Syriam had fallen into the hands of the Birmans. The boat sent by the French commander to bring down a pilot was immediately captured. Alompra,

being apprised of the circumstance, ordered a pilot, in a country boat, to proceed to the Galathié, and compelled Bourno, who was then under rigorous confinement, to write to the Captain, encouraging him to proceed, and come up to Rangoon, assigning some frivolous excuse for the delay of the Galathie's boat, which he was given to expect would meet him on the way to town. The Captain imprudently became the dupe of this artifice; he weighed, and stood in with a strong flood tide, which in a few hours carried him to Rangoon, where the sudden seizure of his vessel prevented all possibility of retreat; the stores were brought on shore, and the consignments and papers proved that these supplies were meant for the assistance of the Peguers, and directed to Beinga Della, and his brother Apporaza. Alompra became so incensed, that he gave orders for the instant execution of Bourno, Martine, and the captain and officers of the Galathié. This sanguinary mandate was obeyed with unrelenting promptitude; a few seamen and Lascars alone escaped, and these were preserved, for no other purpose than to be rendered of use in the further prosecution of the war, and survived but to experience all the miseries of hopeless bondage.

The Diligent was more fortunate; having separated from her consort, she met with adverse winds, and was obliged to bear away for the Nicobar Islands. This delay prevented her reaching her intended port until six weeks subsequent to the disaster. The caution of the captain saved him from suffering a similar fate. He got intelligence of the massacre of his countrymen in time to retire, and carried back news of the failure of the expedi-

tion to Pondicherry, whence it was impossible to attempt the extension of further succour to the unhappy Peguers.

The rage of the conqueror was, on this occasion, exhausted on the French. Foreigners of other nations, who had been captured in Syriam, were treated less rigorously. Some who incurred his displeasure, and had reason to dread its effects, were dismissed with admonitions, and suffered to depart. Among these were a few English, who had not been able to withdraw from Syriam, before it came into the enemy's possession.

The fall of Syriam seems to have determined the fate of the Peguers. Cut off from communication with the western countries of Dalla and Bassien, deprived of the navigation of the Rangoon river and the Irrawaddy, and shut out from all foreign aid, their resources failed, and supplies by water could no longer reach them. The Bago Mioup, or Pegue river, extends a very short distance to the north north-east; the tide alone renders it navigable. Where that influence fails, it degenerates into a streamlet which issues from a range of hills about forty miles above the city, remarkable only for their noisome and destructive atmosphere.

Notwithstanding these discouragements, the Peguers prepared to sustain a siege in their capital, which was in a better state of defence than is common in countries where the science of war is so imperfectly understood. Situated on an extensive plain, Pegue was surrounded with a high and solid wall, flanked by small towers, and strengthened on each face by demibastions, equidistant; a broad ditch contained about three feet depth of water; wells or reservoirs supplied the town; the

stupendous pagoda of Shoemadoo, nearly centrical, built on an artificial eminence, and inclosed by a substantial wall of brick, served as a citadel, and afforded an enlarged view of the adjacent country. The extent, however, of the works, the troops necessary to defend them, and the number of inhabitants within the walls, opperated to the disadvantage of the besieged, and aggravated the distresses they were shortly to endure.

As soon as the rainy season subsided, and the country, which between Pegue and Syriam is low and swampy, had emerged from the inundations of the monsoon, Alompra ordered his general, Me-iiha-Meingoung, to advance towards Pegue at the head of a body of troops. A few days after he followed in person with his whole army; and in four marches they reached the vicinity of the city, through a country laid waste and depopulated. Circumvallation is a favourite practice of warfare with the Birmans, and famine a weapon on which they repose the greatest reliance. Alompra, preferring these to the hazard of a repulse, in an attempt to storm, invested Pegue with his army, and erected numerous stockades, at once to protect his own troops, and prevent communication with the country. Thus secured by his defences from surprise and sudden attack, fearless of any external enemy, and commanding the navigation of the river, he sat down in the month of January 1757, to wait the slow but certain effects of hunger and distress.

The fort of Pegue was occupied by the royal family and the principle nobles of the Talien nation. Among the highest in rank were Apporaza, brother of the king, Chouparea, his son-in-law and

nephew, and Talabaan, a general who, on former occasions, had been distinguished by rendering his country signal services; and had raised himself by his valour to the first military honours of the state.

The Birmans, though superior in numbers, persevered in the passive system of reduction, and were not to be allured from the protection of their stockades. Two months thus elapsed in defensive inactivity. The consequences, however, were inevitable; want, and its sure concomitants, discontent and mutiny, began to rage within the walls. On this emergency the king summoned a council of all his family and chieftains. After expatiating on the straits to which they were reduced, and the hopelessness of relief, he declared his intention to sue for peace; and further, to propitiate the conqueror, he proposed sending to him his only unmarried daughter; as by such an act of homage alone he could expect to procure favourable terms. This proposal was listened to with sorrowful acquiescence by all but Talabaan, who is said to have cherished a secret passion for the maiden; for in this country, young women of the highest rank are not, after the manner of India, precluded from the sight and conversation of the other sex. The chief, with haughty indignation, reprobated the disgraceful sacrifice, inveighing against it in the sharpest terms; and concluded with an offer to sally forth at the head of six hundred chosen followers, and either raise the siege, and procure an honourable peace, or perish in the attempt; provided, in the event of success, the king would promise to bestow on him his daughter, as the reward of valour.

Struck with the gallantry of this proposal, the

king apparently assented, and the council broke up; but Apporaza and the other chiefs, who long had beheld with jealousy the growing power and increasing fame of Talabaan, remonstrated against the measure, as an act still more derogatory to their monarch, than yielding his daughter as a peace offering to a sovereign potentate. The king, by these parsuasions, was prevailed upon to retract the conditions. Talabaan, irritated at his disappointment, took an opportunity of leaving the fort at midnight, and with a few resolute attendants forced his way in safety through the Birman camp. He afterwards crossed the Setang river, and marched to Mondimaa, or Martaban, where his family resided.

Two days after Talabaan had retired, the Pegue king, in pursuance of his first intention, wrote to Alompra, proposing peace on the terms which he had intimated to his council before the secession of his general. The Birman king readily accepted the offered pacification. A negociation was opened, which terminated in an agreement, that the Pegue king should govern his country under the stipulation of doing homage to the Birman monarch; that the ancient boundary should be observed; and Prome, or Pee Miou, continue the frontier of the Pegue dominions to the north. A preliminary of these conditions was the surrender of the daughter of the Pegue monarch to the royal victor. Apporaza, her uncle, was appointed to convey her to the Birman camp, where they were received with music, feasting, and every demonstration of joy and amity.

Some days elapsed in festive ceremonies, during which both the besiegers and besieged had

frequent and almost uninterrupted intercourse. The guards on both sides relaxed in their vigilance, and small parties of Birmans found their way into the city, whilst the Peguers visited the Birman camp without molestation or inquiry. Alompra, who, it appears, had little intention of adhering to the recent compact, privately introduced bodies of armed men, with directions to secrete themselves within the city, until their services should be required. Arms and ammunition were also conveyed, and lodged in places of concealment. Matters, however, were not managed with such circumspection as to prevent discovery. Chouparea, the king's nephew, received intimation of the meditated treachery. He instantly ordered the gates of the city to be closed, and having found out the repositories where the weapons were lodged, and detected many Birmans in disguise, he gave directions to put to death every man of that nation who should be found within the walls, and opened a fire upon such part of the Birman camp as was most exposed to the artillery of the fort.

Hostilities now recommenced with exasperated fury. Apporaza with his royal niece were detained in the Birman camp; the uncle under close confiement, whilst the lady was consigned to the guardians of the female apartments. The Peguers having gained no accession to their strength, and added little to their stores, during the short interval of tranquillity, were not in a better condition than before to resist the enemy. The Birmans observed the system of warfare which they at first adopted; so that in six weeks, famine had again reduced the garrison to a deplorable state of wretchedness and want. The most loathsome rep-

tiles were eagerly sought after and devoured, and the clamours of the soldiers could no longer be appeased. A few secret hoards of grain were by chance discovered, and many more were suspected to exist. The crowd thronged tumultuously round the quarters of Chouparea, on whom, after the secession of Talabaan, and the imprisonment of Apporaza, the care of defending the fortress entirely devolved. In order to silence and satisfy those whom he could not restrain, he ordered a general search for grain, and granted permission to the soldiers forcibly to enter whatever houses fell under suspicion. This license was diligently improved, and the house of a near relation of the king was discovered to contain more grain than either the present situation of affairs or his own wants could justify. The deposit was demanded, and as resolutely refused. The crowd, authorized by the permission of Chouparea, proceeded to take by violence what was not to be obtained by entreaty A riot ensued, in which some lives were lost, and the prince was at length obliged to abandon his house. Repairing to the royal residence, he uttered violent invectives against Chouparea, whom he accused to the king of harbouring an intention to deprive his sovereign of life, and seize upon the imperial throne; and advised his majesty rather to throw himself on the generosity of the besiegers, and obtain the best terms practicable, than hazard the danger to which his person and kingdom were exposed from the perfidy of a faithless and powerful subject. The king, whose imbecility seems to have equalled his ill fortune, lent an ear to the complaints of a man stimulated by sudden rage and personal jealousy. The unhappy and distrac-

ed monarch resolved to pursue his counsel; but being too timid openly to avow his weakness and suspicion, he sent secret proposals to Alompra to surrender the city to him, stipulating for life alone, and leaving the rest to the discretion of the conqueror. According to the plan agreed on, the Birmans advanced to the gates, which were immediately deserted: the Peguers fled in the utmost panic; many escaped in the confusion; the Pegue king was made prisoner, and the city given up to indiscriminate plunder.

Alompra, having thus triumphed over his natural enemy, and to all appearance given a final blow to the Peguers, who, with their city and their sovereign, lost the spirit of resistance, proceeded to bring into subjection the countries to the eastward, including the fertile districts situate between Pegue and the Three Pagodas, which were the ancient boundaries of the Pegue and Siam, or Yoodra, territories. Talabaan had fled to Martaban, where his influence was still considerable, and his enterprising spirit rendered him an enemy not to be despised. This chief, on the approach of Alompra, finding that he had not force sufficient to oppose the Birmans, fled into the woods, leaving behind him some of his family, and many persons who were attached to his cause. Alompra seized on these, and, conformably to the barbarous custom of nations of the East, the innocent were condemned to suffer for the guilty: the unfortunate Talabaan was summoned to surrender, and menaces of destruction, in case of refusal, were held out against such of his family and adherents as had fallen into the con-

queror's power. The danger to which his dearest connexions thus became exposed, suppressed in Talabaan's mind all personal apprehension; he surrendered himself a voluntary prisoner, to preserve those whom he loved more than life. When brought into the royal presence, with unshaken but respectful resolution, he demanded the release of his friends, and his own sentence. Alompra, struck with such an instance of magnanimity, generously forgave him, and ordered the captives to be liberated. He afterwards raised Talabaan to a distinguished station in his own service; the duties of which that general executed during the reign of Alompra with strict fidelity, although he was afterwards instrumental in exciting a rebellion against his successor.

CHAPTER II.

ARTICLES OF COMMERCIAL INTERCOURSE SIGNED BETWEEN THE ENGLISH AND THE BURMESE—REVOLT OF THE PEGUERS—QUELLED BY ALOMPRA—BRITISH SETTLEMENT AT NEGRAIS—MASSACRE OF THE ENGLISH—WAR BETWEEN THE BURMANS AND SIAMESE—CONTINUED SUCCESSES OF ALOMPRA—HIS DEATH —AND CHARACTER.

THE English interests in India were at this time suspended in a doubtful scale. Little could be spared from the coast of Coromandel, then the theatre of most important struggles, to aid distant colonies, and support precarious projects; Negrais was in consequence neglected, though not yet abandoned. The Talien or Pegue government, by the surrender of their capital, being now extinct, it became necessary for foreigners to conciliate the new sovereign. Alompra had summoned Mr Newton,* resident on the part of the East India Company at

* Mr Brooke had retired: and Captain Howe, who succeeded Mr Brooke, had died. Mr Newton was only eventual resident. A Mr W. Roberts was intended for that charge. He, however, was killed at the siege of Madras; and from that period Negrais was neglected. Mr Brooke and Captain Howe had the reputation of being very honourable men.

Negrais, to attend him at Prome. Mr Newton deputed Ensign Lyster to the Birman chief, with presents, and instructions to obtain for the Company the settlement of Negrais, with certain immunities and privileges of trade.

In pursuance of his orders, Ensign Lyster left Negrais on the 27th day of June 1757, and proceeded in the Mary schooner as far as Persaim, or Bassien, where he was detained until the 13th of July, waiting for a person named Antonio, a native descendant of a Portuguese family, who was employed by the Birman government in the capacity of interpreter, and, in consequence of that office, possessed some share of power and influence. This man was charged with the provision of boats, and the safe conduct of the deputation. Matters being at length in readiness, Ensign Lyster, with his attendants, embarked on board four boats, ill equipped against the tempestuous and rainy weather which prevailed at that season of the year. Nearly at the same time, accounts reached Alompra, that symptoms of disaffection had again been manifested by the Cassayers, on the west bank of the Keen-Duem. Leaving the command of Rangoon, now considered the capital of the Pegue province, to a general named Namdeoda, with a respectable force to check the Peguers, he departed from Rangoon in the middle of July. On the 23d, Ensign Lyster, who had suffered great inconvenience from the want of a commodious boat at this stormy season, met the king on his way up the river, and was honoured with an audience on board the royal barge: at which, though from circumstances, little pomp of royalty could be displayed yet his majesty assumed a lofty tone, boasted of

his invincible prowess, and enumerated the royal captives of the Pegue family, who were led prisoners in his train. After asking several questions, he postponed the further discussion of business to a future day, and directed Ensign Lyster to follow him. On the 29th the king halted at Loonzay, where the English deputy was honoured with a second admission to the royal presence. At this conversation Alompra upbraided Ensign Lyster with the conduct of his countrymen, in giving encouragement and protection to the disaffected Peguers. Having ordered presents of a trivial value to be presented in return for those brought from Negrais, he referred the deputy to Antonio, and the Birmān governor of Persaim, for a ratification and final adjustment of the treaty. Being pressed in point of time, the King departed from Loonzay on the following morning, and left the delegate of the English factory to complete his mission with the Portuguese shawbunder,* and the governor of the province.

After some unnecessary delay, said to be occasioned by the fraud and avarice of the governor of Persaim, or more probably Antonio the interpreter, an instrument was formally executed, consisting of nine distinct articles. Some valuable commercial immunities were by these ceded to the India Company; the island of Negrais was granted to them in perpetuity, together with a piece of ground opposite to the old town of Persaim, for the purpose of erecting a factory: in return for which, the

* "Intendant of the port." This is a Mussulman term, understood in all the sea-ports of the East. It is called Ackawoon in the Birman language.

Company engaged to pay an annual tribute, consisting of ordnance and military stores. A particular clause specified, that aid should be given to the Birmans against the King of Tavoy *.

This agreement, the conduct and completion of which seem to have been influenced by the undignified application of a bribe to the intermediate agents, appears to have received the entire sanction and authority of the King. Negrais, in conformity with the tenor of the compact, was continued in the possession of the English; and, on the 22d of August 1757, Ensign Lyster measured the allotted portion of ground, on which the British colours were hoisted, and three volleys of small arms fired, to solemnize the act of occupancy.

Elated with success, Alompra returned to Monchaboo, now the seat of imperial government. After some months spent in enacting laws, and regulating the internal police of the kingdom, he took up arms against the Cassayers, and, proceeding up the Keen-Duem with a fleet of boats, laid waste the western bank, burning villages, and capturing such of the inhabitants as could not save themselves by flight. Having landed his troops, he was preparing to advance to Munnepoora, the capital of Cassay, when information arrived that the Peguers had revolted, and, in their attempts to throw off the yoke, had defeated Namdeoda, and met with such success as threatened the loss of those territories which his valour had lately acquired.

* Tavoy, now in possession of the Birmans, seems to have once been an independent principality, and was recognised as such by the English in the year 1753. It probably owed its transitory independence to the wars that raged between the greater powers.

This intelligence induced him to abandon his views to the westward of the Keen-Duem, and return expeditiously to the southern provinces.

It was supposed by the Birmans, and perhaps not without good grounds, that this insurrection of the Peguers, after the departure of Alompra, sprung not less from the instigation of others, than from their own natural desire of emancipation. Crowds of fugitives had fled from the fury of the Birmans, and taken shelter in the Siam country; some had settled on the east borders of the Sitang river; others found an asylum in the province of Martaban; and many wandered, with their families and flocks, over uncultivated plains, and through deep forests, without any fixed abode, or other preference of a place, than as it afforded them protection from their persecutors, and pasturage for their cattle.

The absence of Alompra was deemed a favourable juncture to make the attempt, and the Siamese were not unlikely to encourage the undertaking. The Peguers in the neighbourhood of Dalla and Rangoon rose suddenly, massacred many of the Birmans, and, engaging Namdeoda, beat him in a pitched battle. This general after his defeat fled to Henzada, whilst Rangoon, Dalla, and Syriam again experienced a temporary change of masters.

Nor were the English at Negrais exempt from suspicion of being instrumental in bringing about this insurrection. No acts of publicity, however, have, on any occasion, been established against them. Love of gain might have prompted individuals privately to sell arms and ammunition to the Peguers; and these transactions, if such did take place, were probably represented to the Bir-

man monarch as instances of national perfidy, and the English described as a people hostile to his government, and conspiring to effect its overthrow.

The news of Alompra's approach dissipated this transient gleam of success. Namdeoda, reinforced by troops and supplies from the northward, collected his followers at Henzada, and marched towards Rangoon. The army of the Peguers was encamped a little above the city, and their boats were drawn up to defend the stockade on the side of the river. An irregular but severe engagement ensued, which terminated in the overthrow of the Peguers. The Birmans again obtained possession of the city of Rangoon; Dalla and Syriam fell in course; and the arrival of Alompra, soon after, finally crushed an insurrection which at first was attended with formidable appearances.

About this time Mr Whitehill, whose conduct on former occasions had given so much umbrage to the Birman chief, either supposing that the transactions were forgotten, or that he should be able to justify the part he had acted, revisited Rangoon in a small vessel laden with such commodities as were suited to the market. Whatever might have been the motives of his return, he was mistaken in the consequences. Alompra, being apprised of his arrival, ordered the vessel to be seized, and Mr Whitehill made prisoner. He was sent up in close confinement to Prome, where he met the king returning from Monchaboo. The despot on this occasion displayed unexpected moderation; he spared the life of his prisoner, but compelled him to pay a heavy ransom; his property also was confiscated, together with the vessel that conveyed

him. Some time afterwards he was permitted to depart in a Dutch ship.

The affairs of the British government in India were by no means in such a state of prosperity, as to allow of sending the supplies that were necessary for the effectual support of the settlement at Negrais. Every nerve was on the stretch to maintain, in the Carnatic, the claims of Mahommed Ally against the French; it was therefore deemed expedient, for the present, to withdraw the settlers from Negrais. Captain Newton was accordingly recalled, and reached Bengal on the 14th of May 1759, with thirty-five Europeans, and seventy natives; having left a few persons to take care of the teak-timbers, and materials for ship-building, that could not conveniently be removed, and to preserve the right of possession, in case it should be determined at any future period to reestablish the settlement.

The tragical catastrophe that followed, presents us with an instance of the sanguinary and cruel disposition that jealousy inspires, when rival interests are to be maintained by the arts of policy and fraud, rather than by open force of arms. The Armenians, the Jews of the East, a description of men subtle, faithless, and indefatigable, whose industry is usually seconded by a competent capacity, beheld with a malignant eye the progress of European colonies, threatening the annihilation of that influence which they had supported for a long series of years, in the administration both of the Pegue and Birman governments. Amongst these, Coja Pochas and Coja Gregory are represented to have been conspicuously active in their efforts to defeat the views and depreciate the credit of the

English; the latter, in particular, who had obtained a considerable office, and carried some weight in the councils of Alompra, especially in what related to strangers, as soon as the affairs of the French were ruined beyond redemption, adopted the policy of attaching to him the few Frenchmen whom Alompra had spared, in order to render them instrumental to the destruction of the English, now the favoured nation. Laveene, the youth before mentioned as having been left at Dagon by Bourno an hostage for his fidelity, instead of falling the victim of retaliation, had been kindly treated by the conqueror, who, pleased with his appearance and vivacity, early promoted him to a commission in the guards that attended on his person. The young man is said to have imbibed the strongest prejudices of his nation against the English; and in him Coja Gregory found an apt instrument to execute his purposes.

Soon after the return of Captain Newton with his party, the government of Bengal thought proper to send Mr Southby to Negrais, to take care of the timbers and shipping materials collected there for the use of the Company, and to retain possession of the settlement. The Victoria snow, Alves master, was despatched on this service, with orders to convey Mr Southby to Negrais. During her passage the snow suffered severely from a violent gale of wind. On the 4th of October she anchored in the harbour of Negrais, in a very shattered and distressed condition. Happily for her, the Shaftesbury East Indiaman was at this time in the harbour, having put into Negrais for the purpose of procuring a supply of provisions and water.

Mr Southby disembarked on the evening of his

arrival, and next day landed his baggage. Antonio the interpreter, of whom mention has already been made, came down to Negrais to meet him, and, being a man of some official importance, was treated with civility and attention by Mr Hope, at this time in the temporary charge of the settlement, as well as by Mr Southby, the new resident. The pretext for the journey was, to deliver a letter to the English chief, from the king. This letter, however, was a forgery, to give plausibility to the visit, and afford an opportunity of carrying into execution the horrid plot with which he was intrusted.

The address and secrecy with which the intended massacre was concerted, gave no room for taking any precaution. Antonio, who had paid a visit to Mr Southby on the morning of the 6th, was invited by him to dinner on the same day, at a temporary building belonging to the English. Whilst the entertainment was serving up, the treacherous guest withdrew. At that instant a number of armed Birmans rushed into the room, and put Messrs Southby and Hope to death. This transaction took place in an upper apartment.—Messrs Robertson and Briggs happened to be below, with eight Europeans of inferior note. A separate attack was made on these by another set of assassins, in which five Europeans were slain. The rest, with Mr Robertson and Mr Briggs, shut themselves in a godown, or storeroom, where they continued on the defensive until the afternoon, when, receiving a solemn assurance that their lives should be spared, they surrendered, and experienced the utmost brutality of treatment from the murderers. Mr Briggs being wounded, and un-

able to move with the alertness required of him, was knocked down, and a period put to his sufferings, by having a spear run through his body; the rest were escorted to the water side, where Antonio, who had retired when the massacre commenced, was waiting with a boat to receive them. This fellow had the humanity to unchain the prisoners, and pursued his journey with them to Dagon or Rangoon, where he expected to find the king, and doubtless to receive a reward for the meritorious part he had acted.

A midshipman, of the crew of the Shaftesbury, was about to enter the house when the slaughter commenced; but on hearing the cries of his countrymen, and perceiving the danger, he fled to the water side, wounded by a spear that was cast at him in his retreat. The Shaftesbury's pinnace brought away the midshipman, with several black people belonging to the settlement, the fury of the murderers being indiscriminately levelled against Europeans and their Indian attendants. The longboat also, that had brought on shore some of Mr Southby's baggage, was fortunate enough to push off before the Birmans could get possession of her, and letting the ensign fly with the Union downwards, gave intimation to the ship, by that token, of some unexpected mischance.

The Birmans thus becoming masters of the fortified works, and having dispersed or put to death all the settlers, turned the guns of the battery, nine in number, against the Shaftesbury. In the performance of this service, Laveene, the Frenchman, was conspicuously active; indeed, the whole of this diabolic assassination seems to have been executed under his direction. It was afterwards ascer-

tained, that when the English were surprised and overpowered by the Birmans, this man rushed into the works at the head of a body of banditti, and completed the slaughter. The precision with which the guns were pointed, sufficiently demonstrated that he who had the management was not deficient in the art of gunnery. The Shaftesbury returned the fire, but suffered considerably from that of the enemy; the second officer was killed, the running rigging damaged, and nine shots received between wind and water. Many of the Birmans are said to have fallen by the fire from the ship. The action continued till dark, and was renewed next morning on the part of the enemy. The Shaftesbury, having unmoored in the night, weighed at day-light, and dropped down with the ebb to the mouth of the harbour, where, beyond the range of shot, she rode secure: the Victoria snow now followed her example.

On the 16th of October 1759, the Shaftesbury sailed, and the Victoria proceeded to Diamond Island to procure water and ballast. Whilst they were at this place, a small vessel was perceived standing into the harbour of Negrais. Captain Alves humanely sent to warn her of the danger; but before the intelligence could reach her, she had cast anchor within the harbour. It does not however appear that the Birmans had any intention of doing further mischief. They contented themselves with setting fire to the place, and abandoned it on the night that the vessel arrived. In a few days Captain Alves returned from Diamond Island to Negrais; where, venturing on shore, he was shocked at the sight of the unburied and

mangled bodies of his unhappy countrymen. Amongst these he recognised the remains of Messrs Southby, Hope, and Briggs; the bodies of near 100 natives, who had been attached to the settlement in various capacities, lay scattered around; the boats, buildings, gun-carriages, and every thing combustible, were consumed, except the teak-timbers belonging to the Company, which would not easily take fire, and were too heavy to be removed. Some Birman boats appearing in sight, Captain Alves thought it most prudent to depart; he accordingly weighed anchor, and leaving the shore that had proved so fatal to his friends, prosecuted his voyage to Bengal, where he arrived on the 10th of November 1759.

After so many proofs of a friendly disposition, the assurances given to Captain Baker, and the compact concluded with Ensign Lyster, it is reasonable to suppose, that some acts of hostility, not thoroughly explained, must have been committed, or that very plausible misrepresentations must have been used, to excite the Birman monarch to take such sanguinary revenge. That Gregory, the Armenian, was the principal instigator, is a fact of which no native of the country, who remembers the transaction, entertains the smallest doubt; as well as that Laveene was the principal agent and instrument of execution. It is said that the former accused Mr Hope, who commanded after the departure of Lieutenant Newton, of having supplied the Peguers with provisions, and sold to them four or five hundred muskets; that he had taken pains to instil into his Majesty's mind, a persuasion that the English were a designing and dangerous people; who, having acquired Indian territory,

first by fraud, and afterwards by violence, meditated the practice of similar treachery upon them: and only waited a fit opportunity to wrest from him his empire, and enslave his subjects, as they had recently done in the instance of the unsuspecting and abused Mogul. He also added, that the Governor of Negrais prevented vessels from going up to Bassien, by which the royal revenue was defrauded. These arguments, whether groundless or founded, were sufficiently plausible to produce the desired effect; and there is but too much reason to think that some provocation had been given, though perhaps of a trivial nature, and certainly not sufficient to warrant a step unjustifiable by every law, human and divine.

When Alompra, after returning from the Cassay country, found his presence required in the southern provinces, he left his eldest son, Namdogee Praw, to govern Monchaboo during his absence. Attended by his second son, Shembuan Praw, and the female part of his family, he then proceeded on his expedition to Tavoy, a sea-port on the eastern coast of the gulf of Martaban, which had been wrested from the Siamese by the Birmans. Many Peguers had taken refuge there from the persecution they experienced in the districts of Dalla, Rangoon, Pegue, and Tallowmiou. Encouraged by the first successes of the insurgents, and secretly instigated by the Siamese, the Birman commandant threw off his allegiance, and declared himself independent. Alompra sent a large detachment by land, under Meinla Raja, against Tavoy; and also a considerable maritime force to act in concert, commanded by Namdeoda. The previous defeat of the Peguers at Rangoon

had tended to dishearten the rebels. When Meinla Raja had advanced as far as Killegoung, within one day's march of Tavoy, the commandant came out in a supplicating form to meet him, and surrendered without any stipulation; he was afterwards put to death by order of Alompra.

After the junction of the forces under Meinla Raja and Namdeoda, Alompra sent his women, and the younger part of his family, back to Monchaboo, and, accompanied by Shembuan Praw, joined the army at Tavoy. Having now a formidable force collected and embodied, he determined to chastise the Siamese for the encouragement they had given to his rebellious subjects. He accused them of affording protection to delinquents and fugitives, and of secretly abetting the Peguers in all their hostile machinations against his authority. Under this plea he ordered the fleet to sail to Mergui, a sea-port belonging to the Siamese, situated south of Tavoy, whilst the army advanced by land. Mergui, being ill fortified, was easily taken. Leaving a garrison for its defence, the Birmans marched against Tenasserem, a large and populous town, surrounded by a wall and stockade; notwithstanding which it made but a feeble resistance.

These conquests being achieved, Alompra determined to cross the peninsula, and carry the war into the heart of the enemy's country. After a very short halt at Tenasserem, he undertook an expedition against the capital of Siam. The enemy impeded his progress by harassing his troops, and endeavouring to distress him in his route, without venturing on a decisive action. A month elapsed before he reached the vicinity of the me-

tropolis, which was well prepared to sustain a vigorous siege. Providence, however, interposed, and, by abridging the days of the conqueror, in all probability saved the Siamese from total destruction. Two days after the Birman army had erected their stockades, Alompra was taken ill of a disease, which in the event proved mortal; the natives call it Taungnaa, and describe it as a species of scrofula. On the first attack, Alompra foresaw that his end was drawing nigh. He gave orders for an immediate retreat, in the expectation of reaching his capital alive, and of being able to settle his succession, and adjust the affairs of his empire in such a manner as to avert the calamities of civil discord after his decease. On his return, he did not pursue the route by which he had advanced, but took a direct road by the way of Keintubbien, and the Three Pagodas, which are considered as the boundaries between the Yoodra (or Siam proper) and Birman countries. His intentions, however, were frustrated; the approaches of mortality were too rapid; he grew worse; and death overtook him within two days' march of Martaban, where he expired about the 15th of May 1760, and carried with him to the grave the regrets of his people, to whom he was justly endeared.

Considering the limited progress that the Birmans had yet made in arts that refine, and science that tends to expand the human mind, Alompra, whether viewed in the light of a politician, or a soldier, is undoubtedly entitled to respect. The wisdom of his councils secured what his valour had acquired. He was not more eager for con-

quest, than attentive to the improvement of his territories and the prosperity of his people. He issued a severe edict against gambling, and prohibited the use of spirituous liquors throughout his dominions. He reformed the rhooms, or courts of justice; he abridged the power of magistrates, and forbade them to decide at their private houses on criminal causes, or on property where the amount exceeded a specified sum. Every process of importance was decided in public, and every decree registered. His reign was short, but vigorous; and had his life been prolonged, it is probable that his country would at this day have been farther advanced in national refinement, and the liberal arts.

Alompra did not live to complete his fiftieth year. His person, strong and well proportioned, exceeded the middle size; his features were coarse, his complexion dark, and his countenance saturnine; and there was a dignity in his deportment that became his high station. In his temper, he is said so have been prone to anger; in revenge, implacable; and in punishing faults, remorseless and severe. The latter part of his character may perhaps have arisen as much from the necessities of his situation, as from a disposition by nature cruel. He who acquires a throne by an act of individual boldness, is commonly obliged to maintain it by terror. The right of assumption is guarded with more jealousy than that of prescription. If we except the last act of severity towards the English settlers, his conduct, on most occasions, seemed to be marked by moderation and forbearance. Even in that one disgraceful instance, he appeared to have been instigated by the persua-

sions of others, rather than by the dictates of a vindictive mind; and it is manifest, from the expressions of his successor, on a public occasion, that it never was his intention to consign the innocent with the supposed guilty, to the same indiscriminate and sanguinary fate.

Be the private character of Alompra what it may, his heroic actions give him an indisputable claim to no mean rank among the most distinguished personages in the page of history. His firmness emancipated a whole nation from servitude; and, inspired by his bravery, the oppressed, in their turn, subdued their oppressors. Like the deliverer of Sweden, with his gallant band of Dalecarlians, he fought for that, which experience tells us rouses the human breast above every other stimulant to deeds of daring valour. Private injuries, personal animosities, commercial emulation, wars of regal policy, are petty provocations, compared to that which animates the resentment of a people whose liberties are assailed, whose right to govern themselves is wrestled from them, and who are forced to bend beneath the tyranny of a foreign yoke.

CHAPTER III.

SUCCESSION OF NAMDOGEE PRAW TO THE THRONE—UNSUCCESSFUL REBELLION OF SHEMBUAN AND NUTTOON—MISSION OF CAPTAIN ALVES FROM MADRAS TO THE BURMAN EMPIRE—HIS INTERVIEW WITH THE KING—SETTLEMENT OF THE ENGLISH AT PERSAIM—DEATH OF NUTTOON—OTHER DISTURBANCES IN THE EMPIRE—DEATH OF NAMDOGEE PRAW.

The decease of an eastern monarch commonly serves as a beacon to light up the flame of civil discord. The letter of the Birman law immutably vests the right of succession in the heirs male. Laws, however, in all countries, are made subservient to power. Neither the mandates of law, nor the claims of equity, can curb the career of restless ambition. Shembuan, the second son of the late king, who was with the army at the time of his father's demise, endeavoured to influence the troops in his favour. Having gained over a part, he issued a proclamation declaratory of his right to the throne, on the grounds, that Alompra had, on his deathbed, nominated him to be his successor. In this step he was premature, and his measures were ill concerted. The ardour of youth

seems to have blinded the prince to the dictates of prudence, as well as to the duty and allegiance he owed his elder brother, and lawful sovereign. He soon found that he had been deceived; that his followers were not firm in his interest; and that, even if they had been sincere, they were not sufficiently powerful to support his pretensions. He therefore hastened to repair his error by timely submission, which his brother, through the intercession of their mother, was prevailed on to accept. Shortly after, Shembuan was restored to favour, and no mention is made of his ever attempting, a second time, to disturb the government of his brother.

Namdogee Praw, although his brother's designs were frustrated, found in a less dignified subject a still more dangerous competitor. A rebellion that bore a serious aspect was planned and executed by a person of superior capacity. Meinla Raja, surnamed Nuttoon, a general high in the good graces of the deceased monarch, commanded the rear of the army that was returning from Siam. Namdogee, had always harboured an enmity towards this man, who, sensible that he could expect no protection against the resentment of a vindictive despot, and possessing a considerable share of popularity, determined to contend for empire with his new sovereign. When certain intelligence arrived of the actual decease of Alompra, instead of proceeding to Rangoon, where boats were provided to transport the army up the Irrawaddy, he marched with the utmost expedition, at the head of the division of the army under his command, to Tongho, and took possession of that fort, which is accounted the strongest in the Birman empire. Encouraged by

the alacrity with which the soldiers espoused his cause, and anxious to push his rising fortunes, he left a garrison in the fort, and advanced by forced marches towards the capital: as he approached his party strengthened, and the fortifications of Ava were surrendered to him without resistance.

Namdogee Praw was at this time at Monchaboo, making levies to oppose the insurgents. Affairs, however, were not yet in a state of sufnceint forwardness to enable him to take the field, as he placed his chief reliance on the arrival of the loyal division of the army that had embarked, and were on the way from Rangoon; but the progress they made against a rapid stream was slow, in comparison to the celerity of a bold adventurer, whose success depended on his expedition and promptitude.

The distance from Rangoon to Monchaboo, by the Irrawaddy, is about 500 miles. In the months of June, July and August, the river, which, in the hot and dry seasons, like the Ganges, winds over its sandy bed a slow and sluggish stream, as soon as the mountain torrents fall, swells over the summits of its banks, inundates the adjacent country, and rolls down an impetuous current, unchecked till it approaches the sea, and is repelled by the influence of the flowing tide. Such violence would be insurmountable, and must render the navigation of the river during this period impracticable, were it not counteracted by the strength of the southwest monsoon. Assisted by this wind, and cautiously keeping within the eddies of the banks, the Birman boats use their sails, and frequently make a more expeditious passage at this, than at any other season of the year.

The division of the army that embarked at Ran-

goon reached Chagaing, a large fortified town on the west bank of the Irrawaddy, opposite to Ava, shortly after the latter city had fallen into the hands of Nuttoon; whom the breadth of the river, and a want of boats, prevented from taking any effectual measures to oppose the junction of this detachment with the royal standard. Namdogee Praw, when advised of their approach, marched down from Monchaboo with the troops and boats that had been collected. Strengthened by this union, the King's force considerably exceeded that of the rebel general; especially as the numerous fleet that commanded the river not only secured the safe embarkation and landing of men and stores, but likewise cut off all supplies by that channel from the enemy. These disadvantages depressed the spirits of Nuttoon's adherents. A party of Namdogee Praw's forces having crossed the river, an irregular action took place, which ended so little in favour of the adventurer, that he threw himself into the fort of Ava, and, no longer able to keep the field, prepared to act a defensive part, relying on the arrival of succours from Siam, a quarter to which he had applied with earnest solicitation.

These occurrences occupied little more than two months, from the middle of May, the date of Alompra's decease, to the end of July; about which time the engagement happened that obliged Nuttoon to withdraw from the field, and seek security in the walls of Ava.

Whatever might have been their inclination, the English settlements of India were not, at this juncture, in circumstances to revenge the murder of their servants, and exact retribution for the insult offered to their flag. Perhaps, also, they were not

ignorant that a discussion of the causes might only produce useless explanations; a conjecture that is in some degree corroborated, by there being no steps taken at any subsequent period, when the British superiority in Asia had crushed all rivalry, to vindicate the national honour, and chastise the perpetrators of the cruelty. Humanity, however, urged some interference in order to obtain the release of the few survivors, who, on the destruction of Negrais, had been carried into captivity. Policy also rendered it expedient to avoid an irreconcilable breach with the Birmans, as tending to give the French interests an ascendancy in that quarter, and enable them to gain a firmer footing in a country whose maritime advantages, and contiguity to our possessions, might afford them opportunities hereafter to disturb our tranquillity and molest our trade.

Captain Alves, who, in the preceding year, had conveyed Mr Southby to Negrais, and brought back news of the fate of the settlers, was selected to return, as the bearer of conciliatory letters and presents to the Birman monarch, from Mr Holwell, governor of Bengal, and Mr Pigot, governor of Madras. These letters appear to have been couched in terms of solicitation, rather than resentment; the liberation of the Englishmen that were carried into confinement, was the principal request; to which a desire was added, that the vessel and property belonging to Mr Whitehill, confiscated by order of Alompra, should be restored. Mr Pigot's letter, however, went farther, and intimated expectation that the murderers of the English settlers should be brought to punishment; a requisition that was little attended to, and which the British

government of India never manifested any inclination to enforce.

Pursuant to his instructions, Captain Alves sailed from Madras on the 10th of May 1760. Instead of proceeding direct to Negrais, he shaped his course to the island of Carnicobar, whence he sent a letter by a Dutch ship to Gregory the Armenian, who held the office of Shawbunder, or *Ackawoon* of Rangoon, informing him of his mission, and entreating his good offices with the Birman monarch, to procure the release of the English prisoners; at the same time conciliating him by a present of such articles as he conceived would be most acceptable.

On the 5th of June, Captain Alves reached Diamond Island, but declined entering the harbour of Negrais until he could ascertain the disposition of the natives towards the English, which, after the recent catastrophe, there was room to suspect. His doubts being removed, he sent an officer up to Persaim, with a letter to Antony, the Portuguese superintendant, who on receipt of it came down, as a mark of respect, to meet the English deputy, at a chokey or guard-house, near Negrais. Captain Alves, dissembling his knowledge of the part which Antony had acted in the late affair, received his visitor with apparent cordiality, whilst the other took no small pains to convince him that he was guiltless. After a short residence at Persaim, Captain Alves received a very friendly letter from Mungai-Narrataw, a relation of the royal family, and vested with the office of maywoon or viceroy of Pegue, inviting him to Rangoon; desiring him at the same time to bring with him the presents intended for the king. This invitation Captain

Alves thought it prudent to accept; and on the 5th of August arrived at Rangoon, where he was received with sufficient politeness by the viceroy, and made acquainted with the rebellion of Nuttoon, and the degraded state of public affairs at the capital.

Mr Robertson, and the soldiers who had escaped the massacre at Negrais, were at Rangoon when Captain Alves arrived, and, though under restraint, were by no means treated with harshness. Captain Alves solicited their discharge from the viceroy; who, though he could not grant the request without special authority from the king, yet consented that Mr Robertson should accompany Captain Alves back to Persaim: and added, that there was little doubt of procuring a general release. In the course of this communication, the viceroy gave Captain Alves solemn assurances, that Gregory the Armenian, by his misrepresentations and artifice, was the principal instigator of the tragical scene at Negrais; and that Laveene, who was in league with Gregory, was the person to whom the execution of the act had been committed; intimating also, that he himself, through the intrigues of these men, had incurred the displeasure of the king, on account of his manifest attachment to the English nation.

Captain Alves continued at Rangoon no longer than was necessary: he left it on the 9th of August, the Maywoon having previously received from him the presents intended for the Birman monarch. An officer belonging to the provincial court accompanied Captain Alves back to Persaim.

Captain Alves, expecting to receive a summons to attend the golden feet, was making preparation

for his journey, when Gregory the Armenian returned from Monchaboo, whether he had proceeded with all expedition on receipt of the letter which Captain Alves had written from Carnicobar. His zeal on this occasion was prompted by a desire to prevent, if possible, any amicable arrangement; or, in case he should fail in that view, to make himself of personal consequence, from being the ostensible mediator and instrument of reconciliation.

On receiving intelligence of the expected arrival of an authorized agent from the British government, Namdogee-Praw directed Gregory to return to Persaim, and despatched along with him a Birman officer as the bearer of an order to Captain Alves, commanding him to repair to the royal presence. In the translation which Gregory, as interpreter, delivered to Captain Alves, the crafty Armenian introduced passages favourable to himself, attributing the obtainment of any attention to his intercession. These interpolations were fabricated, as the imperial mandate did not even mention the name of Gregory.

The terms in which the royal order was expressed, encouraged Captain Alves to undertake the journey. He accordingly left Persaim on the 22d of August, accompanied by Antonio the Portuguese, Gregory, and two Birman officers. The unsettled state of the country subjected him to several unpleasant interruptions. His boat, during the course of the voyage, was frequently searched, with the excuse of looking for contraband commodities; and many articles were carried away under various fraudulent pretences.

On the 22d of August, Captain Alves reached Chagaing, at that time the head-quarters of the

Birman king, who with a numerous army was besieging the rebel general in Ava; and on the 23d he was honoured with an audience, to deliver his credentials. The letters from the governors of Madras and Bengal were translated into the Persian, Portuguese, and Birman languages; and the different versions carefully collated. His majesty expressed his surprise that the governor of Madras should demand satisfaction for consequences, which the misconduct of the Company's servants had drawn upon themselves; adding, that the disaster of Mr Scuthby was an accident which could not be foreseen or guarded against: at the same time he used a forcible metaphor; "for," says the Birman king, * "I suppose you have seen that in this country, in the wet season, there grows so much useless grass and weeds in the fields, that in dry weather we are forced to burn them to clear the ground: it sometimes happens that there are salubrious herbs amongst these noxious weeds and grass, which, as they cannot easily be distinguished, are indiscriminately consumed with the others; thus it happened to be the new governor's lot." Compensation for Mr Whitchill's property that had been confiscated, and restitution of the vessel were peremptorily refused, for the alleged reason, that Mr Whitchill and the governor of Negrais were the aggressors: but his majesty was pleased to agree, that the property of the East India Company should be restored. Having given an order for the release of all English subjects that were prisoners in his dominions, he desired that two of the most prudent should remain to take care of the

* Journal of Captain Alves, recorded in the Bengal proceedings.

timbers, and reside at Persaim, where he consented to give the Company a grant of as much ground as they might have occasion to occupy, under the stipulation that their chief settlement should be at Persaim, and not at Negrais. He assigned as a reason, that at Negrais they would be exposed to the depredations of the French, or any other nation with whom the English might be at war, without a possibility of his extending that protection to them that he wished, but of which they could always have the full benefit at Persaim. In requittal for these concessions, his majesty intimated his expectation of a regular supply of arms and ammunition from the English settlements, together with several other products of a useful nature; to all which Captain Alves prudently returned a conditional acquiescence.

During these conferences, explanations took place, which created at court suspicion of the fidelity of Gregory in his capacity of interpreter: a minute investigation lost him the confidence of his master, and had nearly caused the forfeit of his life. His disgrace was sudden, public, and ignominious.

On the 27th of September, Captain Alves attended in company with the great officers of state and the principal nobility, to pay his respects at the golden feet, as is the custom on the annual feast of Sandainguite. On this day the king desired Captain Alves to request whatever mark of favour he thought proper, with an assurance that it should be granted to him. The freedom of all the English subjects having been already procured, Captain Alves humanely entreated the emancipa-

tion of three Dutchmen, who had been captured by Alompra during his expedition to the Siam country. In compliance with his desire, an order was immediately issued for their release.

The distracted and critical state of public affairs necessarily weakened the hand of power, and diminished the authority of the king. That rigid severity of police which characterizes the Birman government became relaxed, and illicit exactions were imposed and levied by inferior officers, with little dread of punishment. Captain Alves experienced in his own person the inconvenience which an individual, at such a juncture, may expect to suffer. Under frivolous pretences, his final dismission was protracted; nor could he procure the promised answers to the letters of the Governor of Bengal and Madras, until he had paid fees to certain officers of government, who took advantage of the times to extort unauthorized emoluments. After suffering much vexatious imposition, he at length, on the 10th of October, received in form the long expected documents, and on the same evening left Chagaing to proceed to Persaim, accompanied by Antonio. The mandate for liberating the English prisoners was punctually obeyed. There were five in number, two of whom, Messrs Robertson and Helass, Captain Alves, conformably to the promise made to the Birman king, left at Persaim, to take care of the property belonging to the India Company. On the 1st of November he arrived at Rangoon, where he was received with kindness and hospitality by Mungai-Narrataw, the viceroy. On the 4th he took leave of his host, and on the 14th got to Persaim, where he again embarked,

and, sailing from Negrais, reached Calcutta a few days before the expiration of the year.

In the mean while the siege of Ava was carried on with vigour, and the assailants were resolutely resisted. The royal army, computed at 100,000 men, advanced their stockades within fifty yards of the ditch. The batteries, consisting of a few old nine and six pounders, casually procured from shipping at the ports, made little impression on the walls, which were unprovided with artillery, but of an uncommon thickness, being composed of earth and loose stones, supported by a well built face of brick and mortar. The water in the ditch, which during the rains is full, had subsided so low as to become fordable in several places; the besiegers made repeated attempts to carry the place by storm, but were repulsed at every onset. In these attacks many lives were lost. The rebels, knowing that sure destruction awaited those who should be taken, defended themselves obstinately; capitulation was not thought of. Whenever the enemy advanced with intent to escalade the works, they poured on them melted lead, boiling petroleum, and hot pitch, whilst a brisk fire of musketry annoyed them at a distance. The siege was thus protracted for seven months, Nuttoon still cherishing sanguine hopes of succour from the government of Siam.

These expectations were not realized. Supplies from the country failed, and want began to make ravages within the walls, although the magazines, which at the commencement of the siege were full, had been husbanded with the utmost economy. Discontent is ever the concomitant of distress. The Governor of Mayah Oun, who had

embraced Nuttoon's fortune, deserted from the fort. Flying to Mayah Oun, he collected his adherents; but not being able to resist the royal forces, they set fire to the town, and betook themselves to the woods and jungles, whence they afterwards withdrew to the Eastern provinces, where the authority of the Birman monarch was yet scarcely acknowledged. The rebels had likewise evacuated the fort of Tongho. Towards the end of the year, the garrison in Ava was reduced to the greatest extremity, and their numbers diminished above one half by sickness, famine, and desertion. In this helpless state, without any chance of relief, Nuttoon made his escape from the fort in disguise; but had proceeded only the distance of two days' journey, when he was discovered by some peasants, and brought back in fetters. The fort of Ava fell shortly after the flight of its commandant. Such of his unfortunate adherents as could not effect their escape, were without mercy put to death. Nuttoon likewise suffered the doom of a traitor.

The destruction of Nuttoon did not put an end to the disturbances that agitated the Birman empire. A younger brother of Alompra, uncle to Namdogee-Praw, who had recently been appointed Viceroy of Tongho, aspired to independence, and refused to pay homage to his brother's son. Whilst measures were taking to reduce him, he suddenly detached a body of troops, under a general named Balameing-tein, who surprised the fort of Prome; but the Chekey or Lieutenant of Shoe-dong-northa soon after assembled a respectable force, and compelled Balameing-tein to abandon his conquest. Namdogee-Praw raised an

army, and, accompanied by his brother Shembuan, marched in person to Tongho to punish the contumacy of his rebellious relation, who, not daring to risk an open action, shut himself within the walls of Tongho.. After a siege of three months, the garrison surrendered. Several of the ringleaders were punished with death; mercy, however, was extended to the rebellious uncle. The king spared his life, but during the rest of his reign kept him a close prisoner in the fort of Ava.

The appointment of a new viceroy, and the arrangements necessary to the restoration of good order in these provinces, next occupied the attention of the king. This task being accomplished, he returned with his brother to Monchaboo, from whence he soon after removed the seat of imperial government to the city of Chagaing, the situation of which, equally convenient and salubrious, enjoying a pure air, and surrounded by the most picturesque scenery of nature, had delighted the king during his late residence, whilst directing the operations against Ava. The three succeeding years of his reign were employed in reducing the refractory to obedience, and establishing the royal authority on a firmer basis. Amongst the turbulent was Talabaan, the Pegue chieftain, who had formerly experienced the clemency of Alompra. This man, after he had been received into favour, was sent by the conqueror to the Martaban province, the residence of his family and friends, invested with an office of dignity. So long as that monarch lived, he conducted himself like a dutiful servant. The death of his sovereign, however, cancelled in Talabaan's breast the bonds of duty and gratitude; and, though faithful to the father,

he took the earliest opportunity to revolt against the son. On this occasion, he seems to have lost his prudence with his principles. His rebellion was feeble, and easily subdued; he was made prisoner, and at last suffered that death which he had before so narrowly escaped. The Peguers at Sitang, a very numerous body, likewise revolted, but were suppressed by the activity of the viceroy of Pegue, without causing any serious danger to the state. No foreign expedition was undertaken by Namdogee-Praw; indeed the internal situation of his empire hardly rendered such a project practicable. His reign was but of short duration; yet he is said to have diligently improved his time, and benefited his country as much as circumstances would admit. He died at his capital about the month of March 1764, of the same disease that brought his father to the grave, leaving behind him one son named Momien, yet an infant. Of the general character of Namdogee-Praw, people speak favourably. Bigotry is ascribed to him as his principal failing. He was inflexibly severe on those who transgressed against the tenets of religion, or omitted aught of the respect due to the Rhahaans, its ministers. He punished slight immoralities with the rigour due only to atrocious crimes. Slaying animals for the purposes of food was strictly prohibited; and a second conviction of drunkenness incurred the inevitable penalty of death.

CHAPTER IV.

SUCCESSION OF SHEMBUAN TO THE THRONE—WAR WITH THE SIAMESE—SUCCESS OF THE BURMAN GENERAL—AMBITION OF THE CHINESE—INVASION BY THEM OF THE BURMAN EMPIRE—THEIR DEFEAT—REBUILDING OF ANCIENT AVA—REBELLION OF THE SIAMESE—TREACHERY OF THE PEGUERS—ITS PUNISHMENT—BURMAN SUCCESSES IN THE WEST—TRIAL, CONDEMNATION, AND DEATH OF THE DEPOSED KING OF PEGUE—RELIGIOUS CEREMONY AT RANGOON—ILLNESS AND DEATH OF SHEMBUAN—HIS CHARACTER.

THE imbecile minority of the legal heir to the throne gave his uncle Shembuan, who, as the nearest relation, became the natural guardian of the child, an opportunity to undermine the claims, and to usurp the right of the son of his deceased brother. Shembuan, on the demise of Namdogee-Praw, assumed the reins of government with a strong hand; nor is it ascertained that he ever acknowledged holding them in trust for the minor. Whatever he might have done on the first assumption of regal power, he soon threw aside all dis-

guise, and was proclaimed and acknowledged lawful sovereign of the Birman and Pegue nations.

Nor would Shembuan, who had thus unjustly deprived a nephew of his birthright, have scrupled to secure a more firm possession of the throne by imbruing his hands in innocent blood, had not a sister of Alompra humanely interfered, and obtained charge of the child, under a promise that he should be educated in religious obscurity among the Rhahaans, and never be in a situation to disturb the government of his uncle.

Thus freed from the dread of competition, Shembuan had leisure to follow the bent of his own disposition, which was by nature ardent and ambitious. His first undertaking was against the Siamese; assigning for the rupture the customary excuse, that certain delinquent subjects of the Birman government, had received protection from them; and further, that Alompra, his father, had enjoined his children, in his last moments, to prosecute the war against the Siamese, which he had been prevented by death alone from bringing to a successful issue. Such were the pretences, and perhaps as well founded as pretences for war usually are. Two armies were embodied; one destined to invade North Siam, commanded by a general named Deebedee; the other proceeded to the southward by Sitang and Martaban, under the conduct of Mahanortha; whilst a fleet of small vessels, fitted out for the reduction of the maritime towns, was intrusted to Chedookaminee.

The equipment of these armaments was not completed until the commencement of the year 1765; and their progress, after they were in readiness, was so slow, that nothing of importance

could be effected during that year. In the beginning of the next, Deebedee overran the province of Zemee, whilst Chedookaminee, with the fleet, captured Tavoy; which, though it had been reduced by Alompra, was too remote to be retained, and soon reverted to its former possessors. The detachment led by Mahanortha also penetrated to Tavoy by land, and cantoned there during the rains. The forces of Deebedee passed the wet season on the borders of the Yoodra country; these different parties were prepared to act in concert, and attempt the conquest of the Siamese capital.

Whilst matters were thus transacting in the south-east quarter, Shembuan marched in person against the Munipora Cassayers; who, taking advantage of the state of affairs, had thought fit to disclaim the yoke of foreigners, and refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the Birman monarch. This enterprise, however, appears to have been a predatory incursion, rather than an invasion with a view of permanent conquest. The stay that Shembuan made in the country did not exceed a month; he returned, in obedience to more urgent calls, laden with the booty of the frontier towns, and accompanied by a numerous train of prisoners of every age and sex.

In the beginning of the year 1766, the southern armies commenced their operations against the Siamese. Deebedee entered the Yoodra country by the route of Taunglee and Mainhoot, afterwards pursuing a more southerly direction, in order to effect a junction with Mahanortha, who moved from Tavoy in a corresponding time. Their

union was resolutely disputed by the Siamese; and Deebedee's division suffered seriously during a march of fifteen days. Notwithstanding this resistance, a junction was effected; after which they advanced against Siam, * the enemy still continuing to harass them in their march, by irregular attacks and frequent skirmishes. Having at length penetrated as far as the banks of a river, seven or eight days' journey from the fort, the Siamese tried the fortune of a general action; which, terminating unfavourably, their army dispersed; part retreating to Siam, whilst the remainder either concealed themselves in the woods, or sought security in distant provinces. The consequence of this defeat was the immediate investiture of Siam by the Birmans. The fort, by nature strong, from its almost insulated situation, is represented to have been well built, according to the Eastern fashion, having a good ditch, protected by a strong rampart faced with masonry, and strengthened by equidistant towers. The artillery on either side was of little use; for though there were a few guns mounted, and some brought against the place, yet they neither contributed to the success of the attack, nor the security of the defence. Passive blockade is the favourite system of Birman warfare.

The Birman army had been before the city two

* The city of Siam is frequently called by the Birmans Dwarawuddy, and by the Siamese Sec-y-thaa. Both these are Pali or Shanscrit appellations. Most places of note are distinguished by two names; one in the vulgar tongue, which is the most general; the other, a Shanscrit term, seldom used but by the learned, and to be found only in books treating on religion and science. Thus, Pegue is called Henzawuddy; Arracan, Deniawuddy, &c.

months, when Mahanortha died. As the officer of highest rank, he held the chief command, which, after his decease, devolved on Deebedee, who is represented as better qualified for the trust than his predecessor. In a short time after this event, the king of Siam, panic-struck and hopeless, secretly withdrew from the fort, in order to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies, and, eluding the Birman outposts, sought refuge among the hills. The Siamese, thus deserted by their leader, offered to capitulate. Terms were proposed and accepted; a heavy mulct was imposed upon the inhabitants; the defences of the city were destroyed, and a Siamese governor appointed, who took an oath of allegiance to the Birman monarchy, and engaged to pay an annual tribute. Deebedee returned with his victorious army to the province of Martaban, enriched by the spoils of Dwarawuddy.

Scarcely was the Siamese expedition drawn to a conclusion, when a new danger threatened from an opposite direction. The Chinese government, whose ambition is only exceeded by its pride and arrogance, had planned the subjugation of the Birmans, intending to add the dominion of the Irrawaddy, and the fertile plains of Zomiem,* to their empire, already stretched beyond the limits to which any government can efficiently extend the force of restrictive authority. In the beginning of the year 1767, or 1131 of the Birman era, the governor of Quantong sent intimation to Shembuan, that an army of Chinese was advancing from the western frontiers of Yunan, and had already passed the mountains that skirt the Chinese and

* The name by which the country of Ava is known to the Chinese.

the Birman empires. This intelligence was scarcely communicated, when it was confirmed by the actual invasion. The Chinese forces, computed at 50,000 men, approached by unremitting marches. Leaving the province of Bomoo to the west, they penetrated by a town called Gouptoung, between which and Quantong * there is a jee or mart, where the Chinese and Birmans meet, and barter the commodities of their respective countries. This jee was taken and plundered by the Chinese. Meanwhile, Shembuan appointed two separate armies; one, consisting of 10,000 infantry and 2000 cavalry, under the conduct of a general named Amioumee, took the direct road leading to Quantong, through the districts of La-be-na-goo, and Tagoung; the other army, of much greater force, was committed to Tengia Boo, a general of high rank and reputation. This latter was directed to make a circuitous march over hills that lay more to the southward, to endeavour, if possible, to get into the rear of the Chinese army, and prevent their retreat. The governor of Quantong, named Ledougmee, finding that it was not the design of the Chinese leader to waste time by attacking his fort, collected a considerable body of men, and took the field against the invaders. The division of Amiou-mee first met the enemy near a town called Peengee, where they encamped, within eight miles of the Chinese army. On the following day, a partial action took place, in which the Birmans were worsted, and obliged to retreat to the southward of Peengee. The Chinese, animated by this first success, and ignorant of the approach of Tengia Boo, imagined that they should meet no fur-

* Quantong, or Canton, signifies a port.

ther impediment until they reached the Birman capital. With that persuasion, they continued their march, and, deviating from the most frequented road, probably for the convenience of forage, pursued another route by the village of Chenghio. Amiou-mee, though repulsed, still kept hovering on the skirts of the Chinese army; which had proceeded only two days farther, to a town called Chiboo, when the division commanded by Tengia Boo suddenly appeared in their rear. Ledougmee, the governor of Quantong, approached at the same time, with his party. Thus inclosed on all sides, a retreat became impracticable, and to advance was desperate. The Tartar cavalry, on whose vigour and activity the Chinese army depended for provision, could no longer venture out, either to procure supplies, or protect convoys. In this situation, the Birmans attacked the enemy with impetuosity, while on the other hand, the defence made by the Chinese was equally resolute. The conflict had lasted three days, when the Chinese in an effort of despair, tried to cut their way through the division commanded by Amiou-mee, that occupied the road by which a retreat seemed least difficult. This last attempt proved fatal. Amiou-mee's troops, certain of support, maintained their ground until the coming up of Tengia Boo, which decided the fortune of the day. The harassed Chinese now sunk under the pressure of superior numbers, and the carnage was dreadful. Birmans when victorious, are the most unpitying and ferocious monsters on earth. Death or rigorous slavery, is the certain doom of those they subdue in battle. Of

the Chinese army, not a man returned to his native country. About 2500 were preserved from the sword, and conducted in fetters to the capital, where an exclusive quarter in the suburbs of the city was assigned for their residence. Those who did not understand any particular handicraft were employed in making gardens, and in the business of husbandry. Mechanics and artificers were compelled to ply their trades according to the royal pleasure, without any other reward for their labour than a bare subsistence. These people, however, were encouraged, as are all strangers, to marry Birman wives, and consider themselves natives of the country. Compliance with so hospitable and general an invitation, confers even on slaves taken in war certain immunities, from which those who refuse the connexion are by law debarred.

This custom, in which the Birmans follow the example of the wisest and best governed nations of antiquity, is singular amongst the civilized countries of the East; and peculiarly remarkable in a people who believe in the Shaster, and derive their religious tenets from an Hindoo source; who are surrounded also by kingdoms where women are kept inviolably sacred from the sight and converse of strangers, and where the exclusive system of casts or tribes admits of no proselytes. It is well known, that even the public prostitutes of China are strictly prohibited from having intercourse with any other than a Chinese; nor is any foreign woman permitted to enter the territories, or visit the ports of that jealous nation. The Hindoo women of rank are no less inaccessible; and admission into a respectable cast is not attainable by money. To

such narrow prejudices the Birmans are superior. With a Lacedemonian liberality, they deny not the comforts of connubial commerce to men of whatever climate or complexion. They are sensible, that the strength of an empire consists in its population, and that a prince is great and powerful, more from the number of his subjects, than from the extent of his territory. Hence the politic indulgence that the Birman government grants to every sect freely to exercise its religious rites. They tolerate alike the Pagan and the Jew, the Mussulman or Christian, the disciples of Confucius, or the worshippers of Fire; the children of whom, born of a Birman woman, equally become subjects of the state, and are entitled to the same protection and privileges, as if they had sprung from a line of Birman ancestry.

When Shembuan succeeded to the throne, he removed the seat of government from Chagaing, the residence of his brother and immediate predecessor, to Monchaboo, where his father Alompra had kept his court. With this situation also he became discontented; and, it is said from certain superstitious reasons suggested by astrologers, again changed his abode, and made Awa Haung, or ancient Ava, the metropolis of the empire. The city, which had fallen into ruin, was quickly rebuilt; new keoums * and praws † arose; a strong stockade was erected; and the fortifications, which had been neglected since the expulsion of Nuttoon, were put into a respectable state of repair.

The brilliant success that attended the recent

* Monasteries.

† Temples. Praw is a term applied to all sacred objects.

irruption of the Birmans into the Siamese country was productive of no permanent advantages: though beaten, the Siamese were far from being a subjugated people. The inherent enmity that subsists between these two nations, will probably prevent the passive vassalage of one to the other, unless broken by such repeated defeats as must nearly amount to extirpation. Soon after Deebedee had led his army within the confines of the Birman dominions, the yoke of the conquerors was disclaimed in Dwarawuddy. A man named Pieticksing, a relation of the king, and one who held an official station about his person, had, previous to the capitulation, retired to a town at some distance, attended by his followers. As soon as it was known that the Birmans had withdrawn into their own territories, he returned, at the head of a numerous troop of adherents, by whose aid he easily displaced the new government, and abolished the regulations made by the Birman general. The king, who had pusillanimously abandoned his throne and people, is said to have perished in the woods, but through what means is not clearly ascertained; probably by the dagger of the usurper, who, having gained over the populace and conciliated some men of influence, found few obstacles to impede his way to the throne.

Deebedee, who had so eminently distinguished himself, was received on his return to Ava with many flattering demonstrations of applause. His Tsaloe, or cord of nobility, was increased from six to nine strings, and he was farther honoured with the title of Na-ma-boo-dee, or most illustrious commander. The Chinese being vanquished, and the Peguers to appearance so depressed as to leave

no apprehension of disturbance to the state, Deebedee was again detached to punish the contumacious Siamese, and reduce them to vassalage and submission. He left Ava on this service, with a fleet of war-boats, early in the monsoon of the year 1771: the troops were debarked at Rangoon, and proceeded thence by land. On this occasion, the Siamese anticipated the intention of the Birman general, and met him in force on the frontiers, where the opposition he experienced from the enemy, and the difficulty of passing the rivers, which had not yet subsided, were such as to oblige him to retreat; he encamped on the borders of the Sitang river, whence he wrote to Ava to represent the necessity of sending him further reinforcements.

In consequence of this application, Chedookaminee, who had served on the former expedition, received a commission, appointing him Maywoon or viceroy of Martaban, and of all the possessions belonging to the Birmans southward of Martaban. This officer was ordered to make the levies necessary for the assistance of Deebedee within his jurisdiction; after which he was to join that general, act in concert with him, and, uniting their forces, recommence hostilities against the Siamese.

The southern provinces, over which the authority of Chedookaminee extended, were chiefly inhabited by the families of Taliens, or Peguers, who had either voluntarily left, or were expelled from the ancient city of Pegue, from Dalla, and the districts adjacent; and out of these Chedookaminee was obliged to form his new levies. The Peguers, who were then supposed to be sufficiently reconciled to the Birman government, and considered, in many respects, as naturalized subjects

of the state, were accordingly required to contribute to the public exigencies, by furnishing men and money, in like proportion as the native Birmans. In fact, the southern countries were not capable of supplying Birman recruits sufficient for an army; but the confidence reposed in the Peguers was, in this instance, fatally misplaced, and their treachery averted from the Siamese the gathering storm.

Deebedee, probably disgusted by the appointment of Chedookaminee to the Maywoonship of Martaban, obtained permission to retire from the army, and return to the capital: on his departure, Chedookaminee succeeded to the sole command.

Among the troops thus raised, were three popular chieftains of the Talien nation, named Tellakien, Tellasien, and Mecnatzi, men of enterprising, intriguing spirit, and of great influence amongst their people. The Peguers thus collected in a body, and provided with arms, became conscious of their own strength; a sense of which, stimulated by the influence of their chieftains, inspired them with a desire to regain their empire, and retaliate their wrongs on their oppressors. The army was assembled at Martaban when the conspiracy was formed. At the close of the first day's march, the Peguers suddenly rose upon their Birman companions, and commenced an indiscriminate massacre; the officer second in command of the Birman army was slain, and those who escaped the fury of the assassins fled into the woods. Chedookaminee himself, accompanied by 500 followers, with difficulty effected a retreat to Rangoon. The elated Peguers followed the blow, and pursued the fugitives to the very gates of the city, where, their

numbers increasing, they formed an encampment, and commenced a regular siege.

Rangoon could not have been attacked at a time when it was worse prepared for defence. Imaginary security had lulled the Birmans into unsuspecting repose. The Maywoon of Pegue, whose residence was in Rangoon, had, a short time before, proceeded on an annual visit of homage to the capital, accompanied by the principal officers of his government; he had also taken with him the greatest part of his troops, particularly those who manned the war-boats; a hardy and ferocious tribe, who usually attend on the governor, or viceroy, on occasions of ceremony. During his absence, a lieutenant or checky, named Shoe-dongnortha, commanded in the city, and by the gallant defence, he made, proved himself no undeserving substitute. News of the revolt quickly spread, and, from its first success, created a general alarm among the Birmans resident in the adjoining districts. The Miou-gees, or chief men of Henzada, Denoobew, and Padaung, assembled all the force they could collect, and in a spirited manner came down the river in light boats, and threw themselves into Rangoon, which stood in need of such timely succours. The Peguers thrice attempted to storm a strong stockade that encompassed the walls of the town, and were each time beaten off with serious loss. Intelligence of these events reaching court, the Maywoon, with his train of attendants, and a few additional troops, amounting in the whole to about 3000 men, were ordered to proceed without delay to the relief of Rangoon. The rapid stream of the Irrawaddy quickly transported this detachment to the place of its destination. The Peguers, on

their approach, thought it most prudent to raise the siege, and, without making any further attempt to oppose the junction of the reinforcement, retired to the banks of the Saloenmeet. The arrival of the viceroy of Rangoon was speedily followed by that of a still more respectable force, under an officer of the highest rank in the empire. Maha-see-soo-ra, one of the Woongees, or chief counsellors of state, was intrusted by the king with the conduct of the southern war, and the restoration of order in the disturbed provinces.

These events did not deter Shembuan from pursuing his favourite scheme of conquest to the westward. The fertile plains and populous towns of Munnipoora, and the Cassay Shan, attracted his ambition. Early in the year 1774, a formidable force was sent against these places, under the command of three generals of distinction. Moung-wamaa, captain of the king's guard, Oundaboo, and Kameouza. Part proceeded by water up the Keen-duem, and the remainder by land, taking the route of Monchaboo, Kaungnaa, and Naky-oun-mee. The armament by water arrived unexpectedly at a town called Nerting, where the Birmans, landing, surprised and carried away 150 women who were employed in the labours of the harvest. Monadella, the Raja of the Nerting, made an ineffectual attempt to rescue the captives: he fell after a gallant struggle, and 250 of his followers lost their lives. The Birmans, having ravaged the country, and committed many acts of wanton barbarity, proceeded to join the detachment that advanced by land. When the forces were united, they marched towards Munnipoora, the raja of which came forth to meet the enemy, and gave them bat-

tle at a village called Ampatalla, fourteen miles short of Munnipoora. The conflict was long and obstinate; but fortune in the end favoured the Birmans. The Munnipoora raja fled from the field of battle to his capital, where confusion and terror prevailed. Thence he withdrew to the Corrun hills, five days' journey north-west of Munnipoora, accompanied by his family, and carrying with him his most valuable effects. The city of Munnipoora submitted to the conqueror, who took possession of whatever the inhabitants had not been able to remove or conceal. The spoils consisting chiefly of merchandise, and vessels of gold and silver, were forwarded to the golden feet, together with 2000 prisoners of both sexes.

Having reduced the Munnipooreans, Oundaboo left to his colleagues, Moungwamaa and Kameouza, the task of enforcing submission from the Cassay Shaan, and several neighbouring petty states; whilst, putting himself at the head of 10,000 men, unincumbered with baggage or artillery, he marched against Chawal, raja of Cachar, who possessed the independent sovereignty of a rich though mountainous, territory north-west of Munnipoora. In his progress he overcame Anousping, prince of a country called Muggaloo; thence he is said to have penetrated within the Hamalaya hills, which form a continuation of the lofty Imaus, and seem to be a barrier raised by nature to protect the mild unwarlike inhabitants of India from the more hardy natives of the East, who, unrestrained by such impediments, would, ages since, have spread desolation along the fertile banks of the Burhampooter and the Ganges. Pursuing his conquests, Oun-

daboo advanced within three days' march of Cospore, the capital of Cachar, passing many rugged mountains and pleasant valleys embosomed in their range.

Chawal, aware of the storm with which he was threatened, had taken the necessary precautions for his own security. He joined in a defensive league with the lesser rajahs of the hills; who, though waging endless warfare with each other, united in the hour of danger to repel the common enemy. The chief of these was the Prince of Jointy, surnamed the Gossain Raja. Oundaboo, blinded by the ambition of conquest, imprudently pressed forward, until he found himself environed with difficulties that he could not hope to surmount, and from which there was now no retreat. To complete his misfortunes, that deadly disease too fatally known to British troops by the name of the hill fever, had spread its baneful influence through the Birman ranks. Famine and pestilence accomplished what the swords of the mountaineers could never have effected. Oundaboo's troops dispersed, and in the defiles of the mountains and the mazes of the forests were cut off by the natives in detail, or perished the unresisting victims of a supernatural foe.

The misfortunes of Oundaboo and his army, instead of intimidating the Birmans, excited an insatiable spirit of revenge. Kameouza undertook to exact retribution from the Cachars, for the blood of his slaughtered countrymen. Moungwamaa remained at Munnipoora, with a garrison sufficient to defend the fort; whilst Kameouza marched against Chawal, with a yet greater force than had accompanied the unsuccessful general, whose error

afforded an useful lesson to his successor. Avoiding the rash haste made by his predecessor, this more prudent leader diligently explored his ground, halting wherever subsistence could be collected, with which many of the rich and luxuriant valleys of Cachar abounded. Thus continuing a cautious progress, he penetrated as far as the pass of Inchamutty, * two days' journey from Cospore, where he was met by a deputation from the raja to solicit peace. Kameouza prescribed terms, which, though severe and humiliating, were accepted. Chawal consented to pay, besides a sum of money, the abject homage of a maiden of the royal blood to the king of Ava, and to send him a tree with the roots bound in the native clay; thereby indicating, that both person and property were at the disposal of his sovereign pleasure; these acts being considered as the most unequivocal proofs of vassalage, expressing, on one hand, the extreme of submission, and, on the other, the most absolute power.

Kameouza, in his return to Munnipoora, chastised a race of mountaineers named Keingee, by whom he had been harassed in his march, burning several of their villages in the districts of Bodasser and Chaumgaut. Raja Anoupsing likewise made his submission; and repossession of Munnipoora was granted to the fugitive prince, on condition of paying an annual tribute, and offering the acknowledgment of a royal virgin and a tree. Matters being thus adjusted, the Birmans returned to their own country, having lost above 20,000 men, from

* There are passes of the same name in Hindostan.

the commencement to the close of the expedition, by the various casualties of war.

These victories only lent a transitory splendour to the Birman arms, without contributing to the real and permanent advantage of the state. It was impossible to keep possession of the tracts they had overrun, the towns they had stormed, and the countries they had subdued. The Birman nation was far from being populous, in proportion to its widely extended empire. To retain the late acquisition of Pegue, and keep in subjection its discontented and numerous inhabitants, required the utmost vigilance, and occupied all the troops that could with prudence be spared. Oaths of allegiance are considered by eastern vassals as obligations of conveniency, as mere nugatory forms, to be observed no longer than there is power to punish a breach of them. The conquests made by the Birmans to the westward, therefore, were attended with no other effect, than to add to their native arrogance, and to increase their already inordinate pride.

The Peguers, as before related, having raised the siege of Rangoon, had returned to the Saloenmeet, or the Martaban river, when Maha-see-soora, to whom the management of the southern war was intrusted, arrived at Rangoon with an additional reinforcement of troops and several pieces of artillery. Having augmented his strength with the soldiers that accompanied the Maywoon, and drafted part of the garrison, his army amounted to 20,000 men; whilst twenty-four pieces of ordnance rendered him formidable to foes casually armed with whatever weapons they could procure.

With this respectable equipment, Maha-see-soo-ra took the field about the end of the year 1774 The enemy were in possession of Martaban, and had collected, from various quarters, a discordant rabble, ill provided with necessaries, and altogether unamenable to control; from whom the Birman commander met with little opposition, in a march rendered tedious by the transportation of heavy guns, and the difficulty of crossing the numerous watercourses that intersect the lower country. On reaching the vicinity of Martaban, overtures of a pacific nature were made by the rebel leaders, which were rejected with contempt and menace. The Peguers, in despair, shut themselves within the fort. A siege was commenced, and sustained for a considerable time. The Peguers, however, were at length forced to yield. Tellasien and Meenatzi, with several of their adherents, effected an escape to Siam; but Tellakien was not so fortunate; he was captured in the fort, with many others, and, being a leader of the rebellion, his fate was reserved for the decision of his sovereign.

Maha-see-soo-ra was preparing to carry the war into the country of the Siamese, when he received intelligence of the intentions of the king to visit Rangoon in person. This circumstance, together with the little probability of his being able to advance far before the season * when the rivers swell,

* The rivers in India usually begin to swell before the actual fall of rain in the low countries. This is to be ascribed to the monsoon commencing earlier among the mountains, and to the melting of the snow, with which the tops of the eastern hills are covered in the hottest season.

determined him to pass the monsoon in cantonments at Martaban.

Shembuan having repelled the formidable invasion of one enemy, and carried his victorious arms into the territory of another, and having, by prudent conduct, established his throne on the strong foundations of terror and respect, conceived that his presence would contribute to a more speedy termination of the troubles that agitated the lower provinces, and more effectually destroy the seeds of disaffection among the Peguers, which had so often, at intervals, broke out into open rebellion. The temple of Dagon, called Shoe-Dagon, or the Goldon Dagon, an edifice of venerable sanctity and stupendous size, where Gaudma, the Birman and Pegue object of religious worship, was, from time immemorial, accustomed to receive at an annual festival the adorations of the devout, had, in the year 1769, suffered much damage from an earthquake; in particular the Tee, or umbrella, which, composed of open iron work, crowned the spire, had been thrown down by the concussion, and rendered irreparable from the fall. In the Birman empire, a pagoda is not deemed sanctified until it receives the umbrella; and the erection of this last, but most important appendage, is an act of high solemnity. Shembuan, who on this occasion is said to have covered policy with the cloak of religion, caused a new and magnificent Tee to be constructed at Ava, and declared his intention to assist in person at the ceremony of putting it on. For this avowed purpose he left his capital, attended by a numerous train of Birman nobility, whilst, to increase the pride and pageantry of the display, Beinga Della, the unfor-

tunate monarch of Pegue, who had surrendered his sceptre and person to Alompra, was led captive in the procession. An army of 50,000 men composed the body guard. This splendid array, having embarked in boats, sailed down the Irrawaddy, and arrived at Rangoon in the month of October 1775. Tellakien, the Pegue rebel, who had been sent up the country loaded with irons, met the king at the town of Denoobew, and expiated his treason by a painful death.

Whatever respect the glory of conquest, and the wisdom of a well regulated government, might attach to the reign of Shembuan, it must be wholly obscured by the cruelty exercised on the present occasion towards his royal prisoner, the unhappy king of Pegue; and this too, like a more recent and equally inhuman regicide, in a nation professing Christianity and enlightened by science, was perpetrated under the mockery of justice. Shembuan, not content with exhibiting to the humbled Peguers their venerable and yet venerated monarch, bound in fetters, and bowed down with years and anguish, resolved to take away his life, and render the disgrace still deeper, by exposing him as a public malefactor, to suffer under the stroke of the common executioner. In most countries to the east of Bengal, decapitation is the punishment allotted for common thieves; and he who inflicts the sentence, is usually a culprit that has once been convicted of the crime. To die by such a hand, is deemed an ignominy which the Birmans dread even worse than death itself; but for any subject to spill royal blood, is forbidden by the Birman and Pegue laws, as an act of inexpiable impiety. Nevertheless the unfeeling Shembuan, regardless

of law, and devoid of humanity, issued orders for his ill-fated prisoner to prepare for trial on a charge of high treason.

The process of law, in Birman courts of justice, is conducted with as much formality as in any country on earth. Beinga Della was brought before the judges of the Rhoom, among whom the Maywoon of Pegue * presided. The late king of Pegue was there accused of having been privy to, and instrumental in, exciting the late rebellion. Depositions of several witnesses, supposed to be suborned, were taken. The prisoner denied the charge; but his fate being determined on, his plea availed him nothing. He was found guilty; and the proceedings, according to custom, were laid before the king, who passed sentence of death, and accompanied it with an order for speedy execution.

In conformity to this cruel mandate, on the 7th of the increasing moon, in the month Taboung, the aged victim was led, in public procession, through an insulting populace, to a place called Awabock, three miles without the city, where he met his doom with fortitude; and had no distinction paid him above the meanest criminal, except that all the municipal officers attended in their robes of ceremony, to witness his last moments.

State necessity is sometimes found to be incompatible with individual justice, and, on some occasions, must be allowed to plead for measures which, abstractedly considered, seem harsh, and

* In the absence of the king, the maywoon, or viceroy, never attends in person at the Rhoom. He then represents the king, remains in his palace, and receives the report of the judges; to which he applies the law, and finally awards the sentence.

bear hard upon particular members of the community; but such necessity, to be admissible, should be made unequivocally evident. Men whose designs against the public peace cannot be doubted, ought to be restrained by the hand of coercion, even before the commission of any overt act to which the law attaches. The proof of intention warrants and demands such interference. A despot, who dreads the extinction of his power, and the loss of his crown, will resort to unjustifiable means to remove the object of his jealousy, and anticipate on his enemy the meditated blow; but the circumstances of the present case appear neither to admit of palliation nor excuse. The security of the state was not endangered, and no rivalry could be dreaded. The Pegue king had passed more than twenty years a contented and inoffensive prisoner. Had he been only suspected of encouraging his former subjects in any one of their several attempts, at emancipation, his life would have paid the forfeit of his temerity; but, in the last instance, when bending under the pressure of years and infirmity, there was scarce a possibility of his being accessory to so daring a revolt. On the part of the Birman monarch, it was a wanton and barbarous display of power, designed, perhaps, as a humiliating spectacle to the Peguers, whose attachment to their ancient sovereign bordered on idolatry. It casts a deep shade over a splendid reign, and justly brands the memory of Shembuan with the odious appellation of tyrant.

The execution of many Taliens of rank followed that of the king. All who were suspected of having borne a part in the late rebellion, and all whose

influence rendered them formidable, were included in the list of the proscribed. Several fled from persecution, and, after the storm blew over, settled in Tongho, or the tributary provinces of Zemee, Sandepoora, and the districts adjacent.

These are among the last transactions of Shembuan's life. After duly solemnizing the ceremony of putting on the Tee, he prepared to return to his capital, having given instructions to his general, Maha-see-soo-ra, to prosecute the war against the Siamese.

In the beginning of the year 1776, Shembuan left Rangoon with the same retinue, and in the same pomp which before attended him. During the early stages of his progress, he felt the first symptoms of his mortal illness. Alarmed at the danger, and impatient under his sufferings, he quitted his slow-drawn boat of state, and, embarking in a lighter vessel, hastened to his capital, hoping there to find relief; but his days were numbered, and he was doomed shortly to resign his diadem and life to that Power which disregards even the boasted immortality of Birman kings.

Languishing under a slow fever, and distempered with scrofula, Shembuan obtained little benefit from the efficacy of medicine. In order to breathe a freer air, he changed the fort of Ava for the open plains. Temporary wooden houses were erected on the highest banks that overhung the stream, and on spots to which superstition pointed as the site of health. But the skill of astrologers proved fallacious, and no wind that blew wafted alleviation to his pains. After fatiguing himself by frequent removals, he felt that it was but an useless aggravation of his sufferings. Hope-

less of life, he returned to the fort, to prepare for the last scene, and settle the affairs of the empire, and the succession to the throne.

Shembuan had two sons, Chenguza and Chelenza, by different mothers; the first, at this time eighteen years of age, was born of the principal queen; the latter, not more than thirteen, the offspring of a favourite concubine. Competition between these brothers was an event scarcely to be dreaded; and Momien, the son of Namdogee-Praw, seemed to be too closely immured in monastic privacy, to raise a bar to the succession. Nevertheless, Shembuan took every prudent precaution to transmit an undisputed sceptre. He exacted from the nobility a solemn promise of allegiance to his heir, which the respect entertained for the character of the father inclined few to withhold from the son. Having satisfactorily adjusted his temporal concerns, the monarch yielded up his breath in the city of Ava, about the middle of spring, in the year 1776.

The character of Shembuan is that of an austere, intelligent, and active prince. He reduced to a state of permanent vassalage the petty sovereigns of several neighbouring provinces, who had before only yielded to desultory conquest; these he compelled, as Chobwas, or tributary princes, to repair in person, or by representatives, at stated periods, to his capital, and pay homage at the golden feet. Among them are numbered the lords of Sandepoora (Cambodia), Zemee, Quantong, Bamoo, and others; together with several less civilized * tribes, inhabiting the western hills,

* Carreaners, Keins, and Yoos.

and the mountainous tracts that intersect the country eastward of the river Irrawaddy.

Shembuan was in most points a superstitious observer of the rites and precepts of the Birman religion, which originating, as it indisputably does, from the same source as that of the Hindoos, differs nevertheless from the latter in many essential tenets. Admitting the sanctity, and reverencing the learning of the Braminical sect, the Birmans, votaries of Buddho Tachor, altogether deny the supremacy of the Bramin professors over their Rhahaans, or Phonghis. The Birmans, Peguers, and Siamese, as well as all nations whose fundamental principles of religion can be traced to the Hindoo system, and who acknowledge the Shanscrit as their holy text, unite in one benevolent doctrine, the sinfulness of depriving any animal of life, to satisfy a carnivorous appetite. To eat flesh, is not deemed a crime by the Birmans; but he who eats it is not exempt from sin, unless the creature died a natural death, or was slain by accident, or by other hands. This precept of the church, it may be supposed, is not very scrupulously observed, and in many parts of the empire is wholly disregarded, except by the priesthood, who never even prepare their own victuals. Mandates have been issued by viceroys, and proclamations gone forth from the golden palace, to enjoin obedience to the sacred law; but these were little more than expiatory manifestoes, suggested by remorse, danger, or superstition. It is likewise at times used as an instrument of venal oppression; the greedy retainers of the law being entitled to a certain quota of the fine levied from a convicted delinquent. Shembuan, strongly tinctured with

bigotry, often, in the course of his reign, repeated the pious prohibition, with no other effect than causing that to be done in secret, which, before the order, little precaution had been used to conceal.

On the demise of Shembuan, it does not appear that any effort was made, either by Momien himself, or the nobles attached to his father, to recover a throne from which he was most unjustly debarred. Chenguza ascended without opposition, and assumed the government, at a juncture when the flourishing state of public affairs held out a flattering prospect of an auspicious reign.

CHAPTER V.

SUCCESSION OF CHENGUZA TO THE THRONE—HIS IMPRUDENCE AND TYRANNY—CONSPIRACY AGAINST HIM—ITS SUCCESS, AND CHENGUZA'S DEATH—SHORT REIGN OF MOMIEN, NAMDOGEE PRAW'S SON—SUCCESSION OF MINDERAGEE PRAW, FOURTH SON OF ALOMPRA, TO THE THRONE—HIS MODERATION—HIS SUPERSTITION—INVASION OF ARRACAN—ACCOUNT OF THAT COUNTRY—SUCCESS OF THE BIRMAN GENERALS—RENEWED WAR WITH THE SIAMESE—ITS FAVOURABLE ISSUE—PIRATICAL ROBBERS FROM ARRACAN TAKE SHELTER IN THE BRITISH TERRITORIES—A BIRMAN ARMY FOLLOWS TO DEMAND THEIR DELIVERY—SPIRITED CONDUCT OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY—AMICABLE DISPOSITION AND RETREAT OF THE BIRMANS—REASONS FOR COLONEL SYME'S EMBASSY TO THE BIRMAN COURT.

But in the succession to sovereignty, it sometimes happens, as in the succession of an estate, that he who comes to the fairest inheritance, does not always prove a benefactor to his realm and his sub-

jects, or his tenants and demesnes. Numerous errors will, and ought to be forgiven, in the presumptive heir to an high public trust, or an affluent private property; but a radical want of honest principle, and a long continued course of base and licentious conduct, never fail, in time, to alienate the affections of men, whether subjects or tenantry, however inclined they may be to venerate the virtues of the sire in the person of the son. Even the *jus divinum*, so strenuously inculcated by the Birman articles of political faith, did not, in the end, prove sufficiently strong to protect from violence a throne polluted by the lowest profligacy, and disgraced by an open violation of every moral and religious duty.

With all the advantages arising from his father's memory, and with a government thoroughly established in power, Chenguza commenced his reign; but these distinctions he studied by every means in his power to abuse. His first imprudent act was to recal the army from the southward, which, shortly after the departure of Shembuan, had marched from Martaban under Maha-see-soo-ra, and had commenced operations against the Siamese. This general, Chenguza not only displaced from his military command, but likewise degraded from his high ministerial office of Woongee, or chief counsellor of state; a measure that drew on himself much odium, as Maha-see-soo-ra was a person of conciliatory manners, and an officer of approved integrity and valour.

The other parts of Chenguza's conduct corresponded with this arbitrary outset, and he plunged at once into the most shameless debauchery. Not content with repealing the edicts of his father

against the use of spirituous liquors, he exhibited in his own person an example of ebriety and dissipation. Stimulated by jealousy, he caused his younger brother, Chilenza, to be put to death. He submitted the affairs of his empire to be administered by favourites, and accustomed himself to be absent from his capital whole months together, indulging in rural sports and carousals, and preferring his hunting seats, on the borders of deep forests, to the splendid piasath * of the royal palace. In the year 1779, his father's younger brother, Terroug-mee, incurred the suspicion of the tyrant, and fell a victim to his jealousy. Pagahm-mee, another of his uncles, was kept a close prisoner in the fort of Ava, under a pretext that he was plotting against the state. His uncle, Minderagee Praw, the present king, resided sometimes at Chagaing, and sometimes at Monchaboo; and though he affected to live in the most inoffensive obscurity, was nevertheless vigilantly watched by the minions of the palace.

Agreeably to the usage of the Birman court, Chenguza had early been betrothed to a relation † of his own. This marriage proving unfruitful, he espoused, as his second wife, the daughter of one of the Attawoons ‡ of the court, a young woman

* Piasath, the regal spire, that distinguishes the dwelling of the monarch, and the temples of the divinity. To none other is it allowed.

† A prince, to be properly qualified to ascend the Birman throne, should be of blood-royal both in the male and female line. In order to guard against plebeian contamination, the Birman law admits of incestuous marriages in the royal family. This license is restricted to them alone.

‡ The Attawoon may be called a privy counsellor; there are four, who have access to his majesty at all hours,

endowed with virtue, beauty, and accomplishments. Although it was generally believed that he was extremely fond of this wife, yet the irritation of an intemperate life, together with a disposition from nature prone to jealousy, caused them to live on terms of unceasing discord. One day, actuated by an impulse of sudden rage, he accused her of infidelity; and without allowing himself time to judge dispassionately, or suffering the unhappy princess to vindicate herself, he pronounced sentence of immediate death. There are wretches in every nation ready to execute the sanguinary mandates of a cruel tyrant. The trembling and innocent victim was dragged from the palace, and inclosed in a sack of scarlet cloth, richly ornamented. Thus confined, she was put on board a boat,* when, the sack being suspended between the narrow necks of two earthen jars, the whole was sunk in the deepest part of the Irrawaddy. The jars filling, carried the body down, and prevented emersion. This diabolical act was perpetrated in open day, before thousands of spectators, amongst whom were many of her friends and relations. Her afflicted father, overwhelmed with anguish, and deprived of all his offices, retired in despair to the city of Chagaing.

The universal disgust that a conduct so flagi-

and are consulted by the king on affairs of importance. They have influence enough, sometimes, to counteract the decisions of the Woongees passed in the Lotoo, or high court of judgment, when laid before his majesty for royal approbation.

* It is expressly forbidden by the Birman law to spill the blood of one of the royal family. Drowning is esteemed the most honourable death.

tious could not fail to raise, even in the most depraved society, caused the majority of the nobles and the great body of the people anxiously to desire a change. Under such a dominion, no man's life was secure from becoming a sacrifice to the caprice of an intoxicated barbarian, or the personal enmity of some despicable parasite. At such a juncture, the eyes of all were naturally turned to the rightful heir, who had now attained the years of manhood. The retreat chosen for Momien, was the Keoum and Praw of Lo-ga-ther-poo, an inconsiderable distance from the fort of Ava, where, protected by his sacerdotal habit, by the influence of his aunt, and perhaps, above all, by his own want of capacity and personal insignificance, the tyrant had hitherto considered him as an object too contemptible for notice; little imagining that the simple Phonghi was one day to be, in the hands of others, the instrument of his destruction.

A conspiracy was the result of the discontents of the people, and the misconduct of the prince. The principal actors were Shembuan Minderagee Praw, younger brother of the deceased Shembuan, the Attawoon before mentioned, and Maha-see-soo-ra, the degraded minister. These personages easily gained the monks over to their side, who, though less willing to meddle in state affairs than is customary with their order in many countries, yet, being exasperated by the open contempt that Chenguza manifested for religion, its rights and ministers, secretly lent their aid to bring about a change, which, by placing Momien, their illustrious disciple, on the throne, promised to advance the interests of the church. Momien was accordingly tutored for the part he was to act, and no-

thing remained but to embrace a favourable moment to execute the projected revolution.

During Chenguza's reign, military operations seem to have been wholly suspended; whilst the neighbouring nations, the Chinese, the Siamese, and Cassayers, had so recently experienced the power of the Birman arms, that they felt no inclination to stand forth as aggressors. Repeated defeats and severe penal laws crushed the spirit of revolt among the Peguers, who appeared to acquiesce in their subjugated state. The Aroupec-toumeou, or great western mountains, had not in the present dynasty been crossed by an hostile army. The tranquillity of the empire, therefore, during the six years that Chenguza wore the crown, compensated, in some measure, for the licentiousness that was introduced among the people. Population increased, and tracts of land were cultivated, which, under a more warlike prince, would probably have continued an unproductive waste.

After matters were in readiness, the first opportunity of acting occurred in the month of November 1781. Chenguza had gone to Keoptaloun, a town on the banks of the river, about thirty miles below Ava, to celebrate an high festival. As he never observed any regular times of going out, or returning to the fort, it often happened that he presented himself at the gates when least expected, and at hours when entrance is debarred to the multitude. Momien was secretly furnished with the dress and equipments of royalty. Thus personating Chenguza, and attended by the customary retinue, he appeared at midnight before the gate called Shoedogaa, and demanded admission. At first the wicket only was opened by the guard

on duty, who, suspecting treachery from the unusual earnestness of the foremost persons to enter, attempted to close the door, and called out, Treason! Resistance, however, was too late; the sentinel was cut down, and the gate thrown open by those who had penetrated through the wicket. The conspirators, being reinforced by a number of armed men that lay in ambuscade, proceeded to surround the palace, which was in itself a fortification, being encompassed by a high wall, defended by a parapet, and flanked by small bastions. Each gate was further protected by a piece of ordnance. On the first alarm, the Woongees and principal officers of state took refuge within the inclosure of the palace. During the night, the utmost terror and confusion prevailed throughout the city. At day-break, the number of conspirators being augmented, an attack was made on one of the palace gates, which was blown open. The guard, commanded by an Armenian named Gabriel, stood their ground, and poured three discharges from their cannon on the assailants. After a smart conflict, the event which usually decides the fate of battle between Eastern armies, terminated this. Gabriel was killed by the stroke of a spear, and his party fled on the fall of their leader. The ministers of Chenguza were put to death on the spot. As soon as the tumult subsided, Momien was solemnly proclaimed sovereign of the Birman empire. A new council was sworn, officers of state appointed, and dignities conferred on the most active partisans. The next measure adopted to secure possession of the throne, was to proclaim Chenguza an outlaw, in a manifesto declaratory of Momien's prior claim, and expatiating on the un-

worthlessness of his predecessor. An armed force was likewise detached both by land and water to Keoptaloun, to seize his person. But Chenguza, having received timely information, withdrew across the river; and, accompanied by several attendants, effected his escape to Chagaing, where some men of consequence, who were sensible that they had little to hope from the benevolence of the new government, joined his fortunes, and fed him with hopes of being able to recover the sceptre so suddenly wrested from him. These expectations, however, were of short duration. A tyrant dethroned, has no other friends than the companions of his profligacy, and the accomplices of his guilt.

The fort of Chagaing was immediately invested by troops in the interest of the new king. Chenguza at first thought of defending himself; but finding that he was deserted by those on whom he placed his chief reliance, after a resistance of four days his resolution failed, and he determined on flying to the Cassay country, there to throw himself on the protection of the Munnipoora Raja. This intention he privately communicated to his mother, the widow of Shembuan Praw, who resided in his palace in the city of Ava. Instead of encouraging her son to persevere in so pusillanimous a resolve, she earnestly dissuaded him from flight; urging, that it was far more glorious to die even by ignoble hands, within the precincts of his own palace, than to preserve life under the ignominious character of a mendicant, fed by strangers, and indebted for a precarious asylum to a petty potentate. Chenguza yielded to his mother's counsel, and, preferring death to disgraceful exile,

caused a small boat to be privately prepared, and kept in readiness at the gaut or landing-place. Disguising himself in the habit of a private gentleman, and attended only by two menials, he left Chagaing by break of day, and embarking, rowed towards Ava, on the opposite shore. When the boat approached the principal gaut, at the foot of the walls, he was challenged by the sentinels on duty. No longer desirous of concealing himself, he called out in a loud voice, that he was "Chenguza Nandoh-yeng Praw"—"Chenguza, lawful lord of the palace." A conduct at once so unexpected and so resolute struck the guards with astonishment, who, either overawed by his presence, or at a loss how to act for want of instructions, suffered him to proceed unmolested. The crowd also, that so extraordinary a circumstance had by this time brought together, respectfully made way for him to pass. Scarcely had he reached the gate of the outer court of the palace, when he was met by the Attawoon, father of the princess whom he had so inhumanly slain. Chenguza, on perceiving him, exclaimed, "Traitor, I am come to take possession of my right, and wreak vengeance on mine enemies!" The Attawoon instantly snatched a sabre from an attendant officer, and at one stroke cut the unhappy Chenguza through the bowels, and laid him breathless at his feet. No person was found to prevent or avenge his death; he fell unlamented, as he had lived despised.

Momien, destined to be a wretched tool in the hands of others, was not long suffered to enjoy his unexpected elevation. At the instigation, it is believed, of the partisans of the present king, he caused the Attawoon who had slain Chenguza, to

be apprehended; and, on the accusation of having shed royal blood, contrary to the express letter of the civil and religious law, when it was his duty only to have seized the person of Chenguza, and brought him a prisoner to the king, this ill-fated nobleman was, without remorse, delivered over to the public executioner.

Shembuan Mia Shean Minderagee Praw, the fourth son of the deceased Alompra, had ever carefully concealed, under an humble exterior, and apparent love of retirement, ambition that aspired to the possession of the throne. His influence, though less prominent than that of the other confederates, yet contributed above all to the successful accomplishment of the late revolution. An idiot youth, who had passed his life in monastic retirement, could have but few attached to him from personal affection; and the use he made of his early power, did not encourage a hope that the state would derive much benefit from his future administration. Minderagee, therefore, found no difficulty in forming a party sufficiently powerful to crush in its first stage the government of the young ecclesiastic. It is, however, surmised, and apparently on good grounds, that the whole chain of events had been preconcerted; and that Momien, when urged to take on him the imperial dignity, after he had fulfilled the views of others, was himself marked for destruction. Be this as it may, Minderagee met with little to obstruct the execution of his plans. On the first notice that Chagaing was abandoned by Chenguza, he left Monchaboo, and at the head of 4000 men, took possession of the evacuated fortress. The partisans of Minderagee profess, that it was not his intention to proceed

farther, but to do the duty of a good subject, by preserving the fort for his legal sovereign; and they add, that a deputation from the principal personages in Ava, entreating him to come and assume the reins of government, which Momien was found unworthy to hold, alone induced him to take the subsequent steps. In compliance with this real or pretended solicitation, he crossed the Irrawaddy, and seized on the ensigns of imperial authority. Momien was of course made prisoner. Deposition and imprisonment, however did not satisfy the usurper. Without assigning any cause, or granting even the form of trial, the unfortunate nephew was, by his uncle's orders, conveyed to the river, and there plunged into the stream, between two jars, conformably to the Birman mode of executing members of the royal family.

The reign of Momien, from the date of his accession to that of his death, included only eleven days. These events happened in the Birman year 1144.* The present king was then forty-three years of age. He had two sons already grown up to man's estate, and a third by a different mother, yet an infant. Minderagee Praw, having now passed the impetuous season of youth, ascended the throne with all the advantages derivable from experience and example.

The intoxication that so frequently attends on sudden prosperity seems not to have affected the new monarch. He did not forget to prove ungrateful to those whose fidelity screened him in his days of danger, and afterwards raised him to the summit of his wishes. Although he obtained the sceptre by an act of aggravated murder, yet, after he

* Anno Domini 1782.

became securely seated, he punished with moderation, and rewarded with liberality; wisely extending clemency to the servants of his predecessors. Maha-see-soo-ra, who had been dismissed and exiled by Chenguza, was recalled, and placed at the head of the king's private council. The chief Woongee, who possessed power in the reign of Alompra, and had proved under every change a faithful servant to the crown, was continued in office. The person who arrested Momien, and superintended his execution, became principal Maywoon * of the city. The present viceroy of Pegue, then a very young man, had the district and town of Meedee conferred on him by a royal grant, as a return for the attachment his father had manifested towards the king, when suffering under the jealousy of Chenguza; deriving also an additional claim from the circumstance of the king's eldest son having been fostered by his mother, which procured him the honorary title of Teekein, or prince. Many others likewise tasted of the imperial bounty; and whilst obnoxious persons received the benefit of an act of oblivion, denunciations of rigour were proclaimed against such as should in future act contumaciously, or dare to disturb the public repose.

Kings, however, have other enemies to guard against, than avowed foes or rival competitors;

* There are four Maywoons, each of whom superintends the jurisdiction of a quarter of the city. They represent the king in their respective courts. Their decisions, in capital cases, are revised by the Woons in the Lotoo, and afterwards finally determined by the king himself.

the wild maniac, or fanatical enthusiast, often under the influence of frenzy, directs the poignard to the breasts of monarchs. The Birman king had but a short time enjoyed the crown, when he had nearly been deprived both of his life and diadem by a person of this description. Magoung, a low born man, unconnected with, and, it is said, without the privacy of any person of condition, who had always been remarkable for the regularity of his actions and a gloomy cast of thought, had influence enough to form a confederacy of 100 men as visionary and as desperate as himself. This troop bound themselves in secrecy and fidelity to each other by an oath. Their object was to take away the life of the king; but to answer what end, or whom they designed to elevate, is not ascertained. These desperadoes, headed by Magoung, at day-break in the morning made an attack on the palace. The customary guard over the king's dwelling consists of 700 men, who are well appointed, and kept alert on duty. Notwithstanding this, the attempt had nearly succeeded: bearing down the sentinels, they penetrated into the interior court, and the king escaped, from the casual circumstance of being in the range of apartments belonging to the women, which he was least accustomed to frequent. His guards, who at first shrunk from the fury of the onset, quickly rallied; their courage and numbers overpowered the assassins; and Magoung was slain, with all his associates, within the precincts of the palace.

Minderagee Praw, whilst he led a recluse and private life, had imbibed much of the superstition that so strongly tinctures every form of religion in

the East. The gloomy Islamite * and tranquil Hindoo are alike bigoted to their faith, and susceptible of the prejudices which ignorance and priestcraft inculcate in minds uninstructed in the benign and enlightened doctrines of Christianity. During his days of leisure, the king had directed much of his attention to astronomical studies, and became a thorough believer in judicial astrology. Bramins, who, though inferior in sanctity to the Rhahaans, are nevertheless held in high respect by the Birmans, had for ages been accustomed to migrate from Cassay and Arracan to Ava, where they always met with a favourable reception, and, on account of their superior knowledge, were appointed professors of science. A college was established, and certain lands appropriated for its support. These doctors composed almanacks, calculated eclipses, and pronounced, from their intercourse with the planets, the propitious or adverse season to attempt any momentous undertaking. Minderagee Praw had early habituated himself to reverence this sect; he received from them instructions in his favourite study, and listened to their predictions with implicit credulity. Long before his elevation, they had foretold the fortune that awaited him, and the accomplishment of their prophecy confirmed the Braminical influence. He appointed

* The Mussulman and Hindoo, though equally bigoted, yet in their doctrinal tenets are curiously contrasted. The Koran enjoins the disciples of Mahommed to make proselytes of the whole world by the edge of the sword; the Shaster proscribes the whole world, and denies the cord of Hindooism to all mankind. The Mussulmen, 700 years ago, cut the throats of the Hindoos because they refused to be circumscised: the Indians never invite any man to abjure his faith.

a certain number to be his private chaplains, who, on court days, arrayed in white robes, and standing round the throne, chant a solemn benediction in melodious recitative. This ceremony is performed as soon as the king ascends the imperial seat, and before the commencement of public business. Prompted partly by the persuasions of his inspired councellors, and partly by that desire of change which Birman monarchs superstitiously entertain, Minderagee resolved to withdraw the seat of government from Awa Haung, (ancient Ava), and found a new city. The site fixed on for the projected settlement was judicious. About four miles north-east of Ava, there is a deep and extensive lake called Tounzemaun, formed by the influx of the river during the monsoon, through a narrow channel, which afterwards expands and displays a body of water a mile and a half broad, and seven or eight miles long. This lake first takes a northerly direction, nearly parallel with the river; it afterwards curves to the south-east, in a lessening sheet, and diminishes to a morass, favourable to the culture of rice. When filled by the periodical rains, the lake, with the river on one side, incloses a dry and healthy peninsula, on which Ummerapoora, the name given to the new city, now stands. Buildings on the Birman country are composed for the most part of wood; and, water-carriage being here convenient, the old town was speedily demolished, and the present capital rose from its materials; while such was the assiduity used in removal, that Ummerapoora became in a short time one of the most flourishing and well built cities of the East; the fort, likewise, which is spacious and regular, is completely fortified after

the Asiatic manner. A lofty rampart, protected by a parapet, and strengthened by bastions composed of excellent masonry, is further secured by a deep and broad ditch, faced with brick, and filled with water: the gateways are guarded by cannon, and retenchments defend the passes of the ditch.

The first year of the reign of Minderagee was distinguished by the attempt of another petty insurgent, who meditated nothing less than the overthrow of the Birman, and the re-establishment of the Talien monarchy. A fanatic fisherman of Rangoon, named Natchien, a man of mean extraction, availed himself of a prophecy circulated among the vulgar, that a person of his profession was to prove the instrument of deliverance to the Pegue people; and on the faith of this prediction, he induced several Peguers who lived in the district of Dalla to enter into his designs, and engage in his support. These desperadoes made an attack upon the municipal officers when assembled in the Rhoom, or public hall of justice, several of whom they put to the sword; but by the spirited exertions of the Maywoon, the rebellion was crushed before it reached to a height that could endanger the state. Tranquillity and order were speedily restored. On this occasion, upwards of 500 Peguers suffered death by the executioner; which impressed such a lasting terror on the minds of others, that no attempt has since been made by the Peguers to cast off the Birman yoke.

The new monarch, more ambitious than his nephew, not content with the widely extended dominions which he possessed, meditated still further acquisitions, in a quarter hitherto untried by any

descendant of Alompra. Conquest had already been stretched southward as far as Mergui, on the coast of Tenasserem, comprehending Tavoy, and the several ports on the western shore of the peninsula. Complete subjugation of the Cassayers was scarcely to be expected, as from their hills and fastnesses they could incessantly harass the invaders, and render the country an unproductive waste. Zemee, Sandapoora, and many districts of the Yoodra Shaan to the eastward, were tributary and governed by Chobwas, who annually paid homage to the Birman king. The province of Bamoo, the fort of Quantong, and several places of less note, had been taken from the Chinese, as far as the woody mountains that divide the south-west of Manchegee, or Yunan, from the kingdom of Ava. West of Anoupectoumiou lay a country, the fertility of whose soil and its aptitude for commerce attracted the avarice of the Birman monarch, whilst the imbecility of its government invited to an easy conquest. The distance from the town of Sembeu-Ghewn, on the west bank of the river Irrawaddy, to Merong Chickien, at the eastern foot of the hills, does not exceed forty-five miles; thence the distance over the mountains to Tellakee, on the opposite side, is fifty-six miles; but the road * is so difficult, from natural impediments, that an enterprising people might, with a small force, defend the passes against any numbers. The Birman king, however, was too well acquainted with the supine-

* Since the final conquest of Arracan, the road from Sembeu-Ghewn to Tellakee has been considerably improved; it is nevertheless still a laborious journey, owing to the ruggedness of the way, and the steep mountains over which the traveller must pass.

ness of Mahasumda,* Raja of Arracan, and the unwarlike disposition of his subjects, to dread any vigorous opposition. He determined to invade the country, with a view to wrest it from its ancient rulers, and render it an appendage to the Birman crown.

The ancient government of Arracan, according to the most authentic writers, had never been so completely conquered, as to acknowledge implicit vassalage to a foreign power. It experienced, in the two last centuries, the usual convulsions to which all states, and those of the Eastern world in particular, are liable. The Moguls on the west, and the Peguers on the east, had, at different periods, carried their arms into the heart of the country. The Portuguese, sometimes as allies, at others as open enemies, gained an establishment in Arracan, which decayed only with the general ruin of their interests in Asia. Arracan, however, though often exhausted, was never wholly consumed. It always rose from its own ashes, a free and independent nation.

The natives of Arracan Proper call their country Yee-Kein; the Hindoos of Bengal, Rossaun. The latter, who have settled in great numbers in Arracan, are denominated, by the original inhabitants, Kulaw Yee-Kein, or unnaturalized Arracaners; the Moguls know it by the Persian name of Rechan. Mogo is a term of religious import and high sanctity, applied to the priesthood and the king; whence the inhabitants are often called by Europeans, Mughs. Such a number of epi-

* Mahasumda is the Shanscrit title given to a long line of kings of Arracan. Eastern kings, whilst living, are usually denominated by their titles, of which they have many.

thets, used indiscriminately, must prove embarrassing to the reader of the few sketches that have been given of this country. Arracan, or Yee-Kein, stretches south south-east from the river Naff, the boundary that divides it from the territories of the India Company, as far as Cape Negrais, where the ancient Pegue empire commenced. The range of lofty mountains already mentioned, under the name of Anoupectoumiou, nearly encircles it. From the quarter of Bassien and Negrais, Arracan can be invaded only by water, through the many rivers that intersect the country adjacent to the sea. From the side of Chittagong, entrance into Arracan must be effected by a march along the sea-beach, which is interrupted by several channels that chiefly owe their waters to the action of the tide. Arracan thus displays a great space of coast, very disproportionate to its external extension. A few miles below Telakee, at the western foot, the river, till then a streamlet that rises in the hills, becomes navigable from the influx of the sea; in two tides a boat reaches the fort of Arracan. From the fort to the sea, the river expands into a noble sheet of water, well adapted for trade, and the reception of shipping. Cheduba and Ramree, called by the Birmans Magou Kioun and Yamgee Kioun, are extensive and highly cultivated islands, which, with Arracan and Sandowy, form four distinct provinces, and comprehend the whole of the Arracan empire.

The trade of Arracan was never very considerable; it is confined to salt, bees wax, elephants teeth, and rice. This latter article is produced in such abundance, that it might be improved, by proper policy, into a lucrative branch of commerce.

The soil is luxuriant and well-watered, and the contiguous islands are uncommonly fruitful. Possession of Arracan and these islands became a still more desirable acquisition to the Birmans, as affording protection to their boats, which, navigating in the north-west-monsoon through the channel and along the coast, make an annual voyage from Bassion, Rangoon, and Martaban, to Chittagong and Calcutta, where they dispose of the produce of their countries, and in return bring back cloth, and commodities of India.

The invasion of Arracan being finally determined on, the Engy Teekien, or prince royal, with his brothers, the princes of Prome, Tongho, and Pagahm, in the Birman year 1145 * (corresponding to 1783 of the Christian era), in the month Touzelien, left the imperial city, and crossed to Chagaing, now become a place of religious resort, from the number of praws or temples erected in its neighbourhood, as well as for being the principal manufactory of idols, which, hewn out of an adjacent quarry of fine alabaster, are sculptured here, and afterwards transported to the remotest corners of the empire. At this city they passed three days in the performance of religious ceremonies. Proceeding thence to Pagahm, † in past

* The Birman solar year, ending at the vernal equinox, may create an apparent confusion in stating the two eras.

† Pagahm was once a city of no ordinary magnificence and extent. The writer of this Memoir, accompanied by the viceroy of Pegue, ascended one of the pagodas or praws, by a decayed and dangerous flight of steps on the outside; they had from the summit a view of ruins, thickly scattered over the face of the country, as far as the eye could reach. The viceroy remarked, that to count the number of decayed temples on the plain before us, was among the proverbial impossibilities of the Birmans.

ages the residence of a long dynasty of kings, and still famed for its numerous temples, they renewed the pious rites; after which they pursued their journey to Kama, whence 5000 men, under the Princes of Tongho and Pagahm, were detached with orders to debark at Maoung (formerly Loonzay), and invade Arracan, by penetrating through the passes of the mountains. When the Engy Teekien and the prince of Prome reached the city of Prome, the Seere of Shegoo was ordered to fall down the Irrawaddy with a strong fleet of boats, and enter Arracan by the creeks and channels of the Bassien river. The elder princes remained at Prome five days, and then crossed to Podang on the opposite bank, three miles lower down. Here they halted fifteen days, in order to give the other detachments, whose routes were more circuitous, time to advance.

At the expiration of the period that was judged necessary for the co-operation of the different detachments, the Engy Teekien ordered the prince of Prome, at the head of 7000 men, to advance, and attempt the defiles of the hills leading from Podang, whilst he conducted in person the main army, keeping three days march in the rear of the front division. Two generals of reputation accompanied the Engy Teekien, Kioumee Matoung, and Nunda Siekyan; and the detachment sent by water, under the Seree, reached its destination before those that went by land could arrive. This officer met with no obstacle until he reached the frontiers of Arracan, where, hearing that the prince of the country was preparing to attack him, he judged it most prudent to halt, and wait the approach of his friends, in order to prevent the

Arracaners from concentrating their force against his party.

The way pursued by the junior princes * was yet more difficult and distant than that by which the prince royal proceeded; probably they were sent only to make a diversion, and distract the attention of the enemy. After a troublesome march of three weeks, the prince of Prome, with the advanced guard of the main army, reached Loungyat two days' journey from the fort of Arracan, where, learning the situation of the Seree, he sent a body of 1000 men, under an Ackawoon, to his assistance.

Impatient of delay, and probably desirous of seizing the present opportunity to distinguish himself, the prince of Prome resolved to assault the fort before his brother should arrive. With this intent he wrote to the Seree, ordering him to advance next day with the fleet, promising to cooperate and support him. In compliance with the prince's commands, the Seree put his armament in motion. The king of Arracan had by this time collected a fleet of boats, which surpassed, in size, those of the Birmans, although they were inferior in point of numbers. An action took place about two miles from the fort, which terminated decidedly in favour of the Birmans. The Arracan vessels were for the most part destroyed. Those that escaped spread consternation around; while the approach of the prince of Prome's army completed the terror of the frighted inhabitants. Mahasumda, in despair, collected his most valuable effects, which he put on

* The Princes of Tongho and Pagahm were infants at this time; the direction of the armies was intrusted to others. It is a customary thing for Eastern princes to send their sons into the field at a very tender age.

board boats, and then embarked himself, accompanied by twenty females of his palace, and thirty attendants, chiefly relations. This party directed their course to an island called Kiounchoppa; but the prince of Prome, receiving early intelligence of their flight, ordered a detachment of 500 men, in light boats, to pursue the fugitives. The Birmans overtook them within one mile of the island, where Mahasumda being made prisoner, together with all his retinue, was conducted back a captive to his own capital.

When the Engy Teekien reached Loungyat, he was apprised of the success of his brother. The town and fort of Arracan fell after a faint resistance. The booty found is said to have been very considerable; but on nothing was a higher value placed than on an image of Guadma (the Goutema * of the Hindoos), made of brass, and highly burnished. The figure is about ten feet high, in the customary sitting posture, with the legs crossed and inverted; the left hand resting on the lap, and the right pendant. This image is believed to be the original resemblance of the reshee, taken from life, and is so highly venerated, that pilgrims have for centuries been accustomed to come from the remotest countries, where the supremacy of Guadma is acknowledged, to pay their devotions at the feet of his brazen representative. There were also five images of Rakuss, the demon of the Hindoos, of the same metal, and of gigantic stature. These were accounted of value, being guardians to the sanctuary of the idol. A singular piece † of ordnance was also found, of enormous

* Goutema is a name for Boodh, or Budhoo.

† The writer of this Memoir, after his first audience,

dimensions; composed of huge bars of iron beaten into form. This ponderous cannon measured thirty feet in length, two feet and a half in diameter at the mouth, and ten inches in the calibre. It was transported to Ummerapoora by water, and deposited in the yard of the royal palace, where it is now preserved as a military trophy. It is mounted on a low carriage supported by six wheels, and is covered from the weather by a wooden pent-house. Gaudma and his infernal guards were, in like manner, conveyed by water to the capital, with much pomp and superstitious parade.

The surrender of Cheduba, Ramree, and the Broken Isles, followed the conquest of Arracan. Many of the mughs, or subjects of the Great Mogo, preferred flight to servitude, taking refuge in the Dumbuck hills, on the borders of the province of Chittagong, and in the deep forests and jungles that skirt the frontier, where they formed themselves into independent tribes of robbers, that have since created infinite vexation to the Birmans, and to this day commit merciless depredations on the persons and property of their conquerors. Many have settled in the districts of Dacca and Chittagong, under the protection of the British flag, whilst others accepted the oath of allegiance, and bowed their necks to slavery, rather than abandon their country, and their household gods. *

was indulged with a sight of this extraordinary piece of ordnance, and honoured with an introduction to the Arracan Gaudma.

* The sectaries of Budhoo are much attached to their lares, or domestic gods. A Birman family is never without an idol in some corner of the house, made of wood, alabaster, or silver.

The princes of Tongho and Pagahm did not reach Arracan until the business was decided. Although they bore no share in the conquest, they secured a proportion of the booty.† The followers of the Tongho prince, in particular, are said to have committed the most wanton excesses on the unhappy natives of the country through which they passed.

The arrangements attending their conquest occupied the princes for some time. Arracan, with its dependencies, was constituted a province of the Birman empire, and a Maywoon, or viceroy, appointed to govern it. A man named Sholamboo was first invested with that office, and one thousand Birman soldiers were left to garrison the fort. Small parties were likewise distributed in the different towns; and many Birmans, who had obtained grants of lands, came with their families and settled in the country, thereby increasing the security of the state. These matters being adjusted, the princes returned to the Irrawaddy by the same route as they had advanced, and embarked at Podang, carrying with them Mahasumda and all his family. This unfortunate monarch was treated at Ummerapoora with much respect; he was allotted a suitable dwelling and establishment, which he did not long enjoy. Before the first year of his captivity had elapsed, he died a natural death. After his decease, his relations were suffered to sink into obscurity and want. The reduc-

† The inhabitants of Tongho are famous for their ferocity and licentiousness; a character well preserved by the numerous followers of the prince of Tongho, when the writer of this Memoir was at the Birman capital.

tion of Arracan was completed in the short space of a few months.

The more recent actions of the reign of the present emperor may with greater propriety be circumstantially recounted at some future period. A brief recital of the principal events, and a concise view of the existing state of the empire, with the reflections which such a view naturally suggests, will enable the reader to form an adequate opinion of the political importance of the nation that has been treated of, and will close the subject of the present chapter.

The valuable acquisition of Arracan did not satisfy the lust of conquest that inflamed the emperor. He turned his eyes towards the eastern peninsula, where the rival state of Siam was recovering its former vigour, after enjoying a long respite from hostility.

The success of the Birman arms over the Siamese, conducted by king Shembuan, has already been recounted. Although the Birmans could not retain possession of the inland parts of Siam, they nevertheless preserved dominion over the sea-coast. All the ports on the western shore of the peninsula, as far as Mergui, in north lat. 12° 20′, continued subject to them. The island of Junkseylon was the only addition wanting to give them the entire dominion of the western coast, as far as the territories of the Malay prince of Queedah. By obtaining this island, the Birmans would monopolize the commerce of the peninsula, and prevent the Siamese from communication with India by any other channel than that of the Gulf of Siam. The trade of Junkseylon is considerable in ivory and tin. It stretches nearly north and south, about

fifty or sixty miles. The centre of the island is situated in eight degrees north; it is likewise said to be desirable, from the blessings of a luxuriant soil and a mild climate. To effect this object, eleven ships of burthen were fitted out at Rangoon, destined to convey troops and warlike stores. The Birmans, though expert shipwrights, are indifferent seamen, and altogether ignorant of the science of navigation. The present Shawbunder of Rangoon, descended of a Portuguese family, was appointed to conduct the fleet. The different vessels were commanded by persons of a like description, who had been bred up under the Birman government, and held petty offices in the maritime ports; they, however, were considered in a light little superior to pilots, being under the check and controul of the commander of the land forces on board. This fleet reached Mergui in the month of January 1785.

In support of the troops and squadron sent by sea, a detachment of 8000 men marched in the month of November from Rangoon. This body did not reach Mergui until the 18th of February. On the 7th of March following, the fleet weighed anchor, and the forces by land made a correspondent movement. The arm of the sea that divides Junkseylon from the main is in some places very narrow. The Birmans, immediately on their arrival, attacked the fort, which is situated on the east side of the island, and were successful, notwithstanding a spirited resistance made by Prawselong, the Siamese governor, who afterwards withdrew from the fort into the interior of the island. The Birmans found here a valuable booty, which they embarked on board a vessel captured in the

harbour, belonging to a Mussulman merchant of Masulipatam; but the ship never reached her destined port. Meeting with a gale of wind in the Bay of Martaban, she foundered at sea, and every soul perished. The triumph of the Birmans was of short duration. The Siamese governor rallied his forces, and, having procured an addition to his strength, became in his turn the assailant, with so good effect, that the Birmans thought fit to retreat to their shipping, which they did not accomplish without a heavy loss. Apprehensive of yet greater disasters, they returned to Mergui, whence the fleet sailed for Rangoon, and the troops marched to Martaban, with intent to canton during the rainy season.

The Birman monarch, whose pride was deeply mortified at the ill fortune of his arms at Junkseylon, resolved to repair the disgrace, and invade Siam with such a force as he conceived would be irresistible; and further, to insure success, announced his intention to lead the troops in person. He accordingly left Ummerapoora at the head of 30,000 men, with a train of twenty field-pieces, and, taking the route of Tongho, reached Martaban in the spring of the year 1786. A detachment was likewise sent to invade North Siam, and another ordered to penetrate on the southern quarter from Tavoy. A fleet was also equipped, consisting of sixteen ships, mostly belonging to traders, which were either hired of the owners, or impressed for the occasion. This armament blocked up the harbour of Junkseylon. Such vigorous preparations inspired the Birmans with sanguine hopes. Too much confidence, however, often betrays into

error. The emperor, already anticipating victory, marched from Martaban, and had scarcely entered the Siamese territories, when he was opposed by Pietickstng, the king of Siam, with a powerful army. A furious engagement ensued, in which the Birmans were completely routed, and their useless cannon * taken by the enemy. The emperor himself, who narrowly escaped being made prisoner, returned to his capital with precipitation. The fugitives found protection in Martaban; and the other detachments, hearing of the misfortune of the main body, likewise retreated. The season for field-operations being far advanced, hostilities were for some time suspended on both sides.

In the commencement of the ensuing year, the Siamese, in considerable force, laid siege to Tavoy; but after a long struggle, were compelled to retreat, and abandon the enterprise. The place was defended by Maha-see-soo-ra, who, in the month of April 1788, was promoted to the Maywoonship, or Viceroyalty of Martaban, which comprehends within its jurisdiction Tavoy, Mergui, and all the Birman possessions to the southward. Tavoy, being a place of great importance, was left with a strong garrison, to the care of an officer named Numeapeou, by some called Miapeou, a man of low extraction, whose father had originally been a merchant of small ware between China and Ava, and, having amassed money, obtained influence by a judicious application of his wealth. For some time Miapeou conducted himself with fidelity in his command; but on the decease of

* Many well informed men among the Birmans ascribe their defeat to the incumbrance of their cannon, which were old ship guns mounted on low carriages.

Maha-see-soo-ra, in the year 1790, being disappointed of the viceroyalty of Martaban, which was given to an officer named Meen-la-ze-zo, he entered into an intrigue with the Siamese, and agreed to deliver up the fort to them, on certain stipulations for himself and his adherents. The compact being concluded, possession was given to the enemy, who stationed a strong garrison in it; and, as a further protection, encamped a body of troops in its neighbourhood.

Early in the year 1791, Sombee Meengee and Attawoon Mien, officers of high distinction, were ordered to proceed from Ummerapoora by land against the rebels. A fleet of sixty boats sailed about the same time from Rangoon, which were speedily to be followed by three ships, then fitting out at the same port. The boats, having arrived before the ships could reach their destination, injudiciously entered the river of Tavoy, and began an attack on the suburbs bordering on the banks. Miapeou, with a party of rebel Birmans and a detachment of Siamese, opposed them, and in light war-boats soon got the better of the unwieldy junks that had crossed the bay. Many of the Birman vessels were destroyed, and those that escaped took refuge in Mergui, where, soon after this disaster, the ships also arrived.

The army from Ummerapoora, having reached Martaban, halted there during the rainy monsoon. Early in the season for action, the Engy Praw, or prince royal, left the capital, and came down to Rangoon, bringing with him a considerable accession to the southern force. The Assay Woongee, and several of distinguished rank, attended in his suite. By the time he had reached Rangoon, the

first division, under Sombee Meengee and Attawoon Mien, had proceeded against Tavoy. The prince halted at Rangoon, but sent forward the greatest part of his troops to support the advanced army. The ships also that had put into Mergui, again sailed for Tavoy. On the arrival of the army and shipping, an engagement took place betwen the Siamese and Birmans, partly on land, and partly at the mouth of the river, the Siamese disputing the entrance in their war-boats. In this contest the Siamese were worsted, and driven with great slaughter into the fort, which the Birmans immediately invested, and, having entrenched and stockaded themselves, commenced a formal blockade. No supplies could now reach the besieged, whilst the Birmans, though the adjacent country was unproductive, being masters of the sea, procured subsistence from Arracan and Rangoon, which the provincial officers of those countries transported to the army in whatever ships they could lay their hands on, pressing indiscriminately the vessels * of all nations that happened to be in their ports. The siege was thus protracted for some months, and the place at last fell by treachery. The Birmans, who under Miapeou had originally been instrumental to putting the fort in possession of the Siamese, became discontented, probably through want. A clandestine correspondence commenced between them and the lead-

* Among these were several ships belonging to English traders, the commanders of which forwarded a remonstrance to Lord Cornwallis and the Supreme Council, complaining of the outrage. It is generally supposed, that the Birman king ordered liberal remuneration to be made to those whose ships were pressed, but that the provincial officers fradulently withheld his bounty.

ers of the besieging army. A proper understanding being established, at a concerted hour of the night, the enemy advanced to storm the outworks of the fort. When the Siamese rose to repel the assault, the Birmans within, whose fidelity was not suspected, fell upon the garrison, which, consisting of 3000 gallant soldiers, were cut to pieces, either by their pretended allies or avowed foes, who soon gained admission through the means of their perfidious countrymen. Miapeou was not found; he had withdrawn from the fort some time before, and esceaped into the country of the Siamese. The Birmans thus again became masters of the important fortress of Tavoy.

In the mean while, affairs at Mergui seemed likely to exhibit a different scene from that which was passing at Tavoy. Here the Birmans acted on the defensive, and the Siamese were the assailants. A brother of the king of Siam had invested the garrison with a strong force, and pressed the siege so closely, that the Birmans were reduced to the utmost extremity, and must have surrendered, but for the opportune arrival of six ships and 5000 men, detached to their aid from Tavoy. The besiegers, disheartened by the appearance of these succours, relinquished the enterprise, and retired into the interior of the country.

Subsequent to these events, no action of importance appears to have taken place between the contending powers. The year 1793 opened with overtures for peace on the part of the Siamese. A negociation commenced, which speedily terminated in the ratification of a treaty highly favourable to the Birman interests. By this compact, the Siamese ceded to the Birmans the western

maritime towns as far south as Mergui, thus yielding to them entire possession of the coast of Tenasserem, and the two important ports of Mergui and Tavoy; acquisitions of great moment, when considered either in a political or commercial light.

Indisputably pre-eminent among the nations inhabiting the vast peninsula that separates the gulf of Bengal from the Chinese sea; possessed of a territory equal in extent to the German empire; blessed with a salubrious climate, and a soil capable of producing almost every article of luxury, convenience, and commerce, that the East can supply, Miamma, or Birmah, thus happily circumstanced, enjoyed the pleasing prospect of a long exemption from the miseries of war; but unbending pride, and resentment unjustifiably prosecuted, nearly embroiled them in fresh troubles, before they had time to profit by the advantages of peace, and threatened to raise them up a foe far more formidable than the Chinese, Arracaners, Peguers, Siamese, and Cassayers.

The trade of Arracan, which is chiefly carried on with the Eastern ports through an inland navigation, when the rivers are swollen by the rains, had suffered repeated interruptions from piratical banditti, who, infesting the Broken Islands, among which the channels wind, that are the usual course of boats, not only committed depredations on private merchants, but had even the hardiness to attack fleets laden with the royal customs. * These robbers, when the season of the year did not admit of their plundering on the water, sought adventures by land; and as the Birmans allege, con-

* Customs are usually received in kind, viz. one-tenth of the commodity.

veyed their booty of goods and cattle across the river Naaf, into the Chittagong province, where, secure from pursuit, being then under protection of the British flag, they dispose of their spoils to advantage, and lived at ease, until returning want impelled them to renew their predatory inroads.

The river Naaf, which bounds the British and Birman territories, is situated at a considerable distance from the town of Chittagong, the seat of provincial government, and residence of the English magistrate. The banks of this river are covered with deep jungles, interspersed with scanty spots of cultivation, and a few wretched villages, where dwell the poorest class of herdsmen, and the families of roving hunters, whose occupation it is to catch and tame the wild elephants, with which these forests abound. The asylum that such unfrequented places offered to persons concerned in a lawless traffic, rendered it easy to be carried on without the knowledge of the English officers of justice; nor could it possibly reach the notice of the Supreme Board, unless a proper representation was made, either by the individuals that were aggrieved, or by the government of their country. This, however, was a condescension, to which the mighty Emperor of the Birmans, who conceives himself superior to every potentate on earth, would never stoop. To ask redress was beneath his dignity; he proceeded by a more summary course to do himself justice. On its being ascertained that three distinguished leaders of the robbers had sought refuge in the British districts, his Birman Majesty, without communicating his intention, or in any form demanding the fugitives, thought fit to order a body of 5000 men, under

an officer of rank, to enter the Company's territories, with positive injunctions to the commander not to return, unless he brought with him the delinquents dead or alive; further, to support this detachment, an army of 20,000 men were held in readiness at Arracan.

So unexpected an aggression, offered without any previous remonstrance, or the assignment of any plea, left no room for discussing the merits of the case. The Birmans having taken upon themselves to redress their own grievances, it became necessary to convince them that they had mistaken the mode; and what they might readily procure from English justice, they could never extort through fear. To accomplish this purpose, a strong detachment was formed at the presidency; the conduct of which was intrusted to Major General Erskine. The troops proceeded from Calcutta to Chittagong, a battalion of Europeans and artillery by water, and the native sepoys by land.

Seree Nunda Kiozo, the Birman chief, to whom the arduous task of reclaiming the fugitives was assigned, acted with more circumspection and prudence than the government from which he had received his instructions. After his army had crossed the river, and encamped on the western bank, he dictated a letter to the British judge and magistrate of Chittagong, acquainting him of the reasons for the inroad; that the capture of the delinquents was his sole object, without harbouring any design of hostilities against the English. At the same time he declared, in a style of peremptory demand, that until they were given up, he would not depart from the Company's territories. In confirmation of this menace, he fortified his camp in

the Birman manner, with a stockade, and seemed determined to resist any attempt to oblige him to retire. These matters being reported to Government, the Governor-general was pleased to order the magistrate of Chittagong to apprehend the refugees, and keep them in safe custody until further directions.

On the approach of General Erskine, Seree Nunda Kioso sent a flag of truce, to propose terms of accommodation, stipulating for the surrender of the fugitives, as the basis of the agreement. The General replied, that no proposals could be listened to whilst the Birmans continued on English ground; but as soon as they should withdraw from their fortified camp, and retire within their own frontiers, he would enter upon the subject of their complaints; notifying also, that unless they evacuated the Company's possessions in a limited time, force would be used to compel them. The Birman chief, in a manly confidence of the English character, personally waited on General Erskine, and disclosed to him the nature of his instructions, the enormity of the offenders, and the outrages they had committed. General Erskine, whose moderation and judgment on this occasion cannot be too highly commended, assured him, that it was far from the intention of the British government to screen delinquents, or sanction in their country an asylum for robbers; but as the manner in which the Birman troops had entered the Company's district was so repugnant to the principles that ought to regulate the conduct of civilized nations, it was impossible for him to recede from his first determination. He gave hopes, notwithstand-

ing, that if the Birmans peaceably retired, the Governor-general would institute a regular inquiry into the charges preferred against the prisoners; adding, that instant compliance with the conditions prescribed was the only ground on which they could expect so great an indulgence. The Birman general, either contented with this intimation, or convinced that opposition would be fruitless, professed his reliance on General Erskine, and agreed to withdraw his troops. The retreat was conducted in the most orderly manner; and so strict was the subordination observed in the Birman army, that not one act of violence was committed either on the person or property of British subjects, during the time their troops continued within the Company's districts. General Erskine was afterwards empowered, by the Governor-general, to investigate the charges against the refugees, when, after a formal and deliberate hearing, their guilt being established on the clearest evidence, they were delivered over to their own laws, by whose sentence, two out of the three underwent capital punishment.

The amicable termination of this difference afforded favourable opportunity to acquire a more accurate knowledge than had hitherto been obtained, of a people whose situation, extent of territory, and commercial connexions with British India, rendered a liberal intercourse with them highly desirable. The trade between Calcutta, Madras, and Rangoon, had of late years so rapidly increased, as to become an object of national importance, more particularly on account of teak timber, the produce of Ava and Pegue, whence

Calcutta and Madras * draw all their supplies of wood for various other purposes. A commerce in one article so essential to us, and, on a general scale, so extensive as to require an annual return of Indian commodities to the amount of 200,000*l.* Sterling, was an object well worth cultivating. Representations had, at different times, been made to the Supreme Board, by private merchants and mariners, complaining of injustice and oppression at the port of Rangoon. The recent inroad of the Birmans, which originated partly in pride, and partly in ignorance, would probably not have occurred, had there existed an authorized channel of intercourse between the respective governments. To prevent the recurrence of a like misunderstanding, to form a commercial connexion on equitable and fixed principles, and to establish a confidential and authentic correspondence, such as ought to subsist between two great and contiguous nations, Sir John Shore (now Lord Teignmouth) thought proper to send a formal deputation to the Birman court. Nor were these the only ends to be answered by the embassy. The influence which the natural enemies of Great Britain had acquired in that quarter was to be combated, and, if possible, overcome; whilst the natives were to be impressed with an adequate sense of the power, the

* Teak cannot be conveyed from the Malabar to the Coromandel coast, or to Calcutta, but at an expense so great as to preclude the attempt. It is said, that this incomparable wood grows in perfection on the banks of the river Godavery; but the impediments of procuring it from that quarter have hitherto been found insurmountable. Several excellent ships, built in the river of Bengal, of Pegue teak, have delivered and received cargoes in the river Thames.

resources, and, above all, the equity of the British character, in such a manner as to convince them that their real interests were connected with a state that neither meditated, nor would suffer encroachment; and sought for nothing beyond an interchange of merchandise, on terms mutually beneficial. The result of this mission, through the various stages of its progress and completion, will be detailed in the subsequent pages. Thus far it has realized the expectations of the British government, and gives a flattering promise of national advantage, except it should hereafter be obstructed by impediments, which no penetration can foresee, and against which no human compact can provide.

The Birmans, under their present monarch, are certainly rising fast in the scale of Oriental nations; and it is to be hoped, that a long respite from foreign wars will give them leisure to improve their natural advantages. Knowledge increases with commerce; and as they are not shackled by any prejudices of casts, restricted to hereditary occupations, or forbidden from participating with strangers in every social bond, their advancement will, in all probability, be rapid. At present, so far from being in a state of intellectual darkness, although they have not explored the depths of science, nor reached to excellence in the finer arts, they yet have an undeniable claim to the character of a civilized and well instructed people. Their laws are wise, and pregnant with sound morality; their police is better regulated than in most European countries; their natural disposition is friendly, and hospitable to strangers; and their manners rather expressive of manly can-

dour, than courteous dissimulation. The gradations of rank, and the respect due to station, are maintained with a scrupulosity which never relaxes. A knowledge of letters is so widely diffused, that there are no mechanics, few of the peasantry, or even the common watermen (usually the most illiterate class), who cannot read and write in the vulgar tongue. Few, however, are versed in the more erudite volumes of science, which, containing many Shanscrit terms, and often written in the Pali text, are (like the Hindoo Shasters) above the comprehension of the multitude; but the feudal system, which cherishes ignorance, and renders man the property of man, still operates as a check to civilization and improvement. This is a bar which gradually weakens, as their acquaintance with the customs and manners of other nations extends; and unless the rage of civil discord be again excited, or some foreign power impose an alien yoke, the Birmans bid fair to be a prosperous, wealthy, and enlightened people.

CHAPTER VI.

EMBARK ON BOARD THE SEAHORSE—SAIL FROM CALCUTTA—MAKE THE COCOA ISLANDS—TOUCH AT PORT CORNWALLIS, IN THE GREAT ANDAMAN—HOSPITABLY RECEIVED BY CAPTAINS RAMSAY AND STOKOE—SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ISLAND—IMPERFECTLY KNOWN TO THE ANCIENTS—BARBARISM AND WRETCHED STATE OF THE NATIVES—SINGULAR ACCOUNT OF TWO YOUNG WOMEN—FREQUENT SCARCITY OF FOOD—BRUTAL BEHAVIOUR OF SOME BENGAL FISHERMEN—NATURAL PRODUCTS OF THE ISLAND—RAINS EXCESSIVE—COLONY SICKLY—CAUSES—PREPARE TO DEPART.

HAVING received my commissions from the Governor-general, one appointing me Agent Plenipotentiary, with powers to treat, in the name of the Supreme Government of India, with the Emperor of Ava; the other, vesting in me authority to take cognizance of the conduct of the British subjects trading to, or residing in, the countries that I was destined to visit; on the 21st of February 1795, I embarked at Calcutta, on board the Seahorse, an armed cruizer belonging to the East

India Company, Captain Thomas, commander, attended by Mr Wood, Assistant and Secretary, and Dr Buchanan, Surgeon to the mission. A Havildar, * Naick, † and 14 Sepoys, selected from a battalion at the military station of Barracpore, formed an attendant guard; these, with an Hindoo Pundit, ‡ for whose company I was indebted to the goodness of Sir Robert Chambers, a Moonshee, § and inferior domestics of various descriptions, increased our numbers to more than seventy persons. Light and unfavourable breezes retarded our progress down the river, and, before we had got clear, an accident happened that created much concern. An hospital assistant, in the employment of Dr Buchanan, who had never before been in a ship, arose in the middle of the night, walked leisurely to the gangway, and, insensible to his situation, stepped overboard into a rapid tide, and was heard of no more. This early loss of a good and useful man impressed upon the whole crew a general sentiment of regret.

On the evening of the 26th, our pilot left us in seven fathom water, having then passed all the dangers of the channel. The wind continuing foul, we anchored for the night. Next morning weighed and stood to the south-east with a favouring breeze, which blew without intermission till the fourth of March, when we made the Great and Little Cocoa Islands, so called from being clothed with cocoa-nut trees of unusual luxuriance. These islands are flat, small, and swampy; they are uninhabited, and

* Native sergeant. † Native corporal.
‡ Professor of Hindoo learning.
§ A Mussulman professor of language.

destitute of good water. We perceived the ruins of a hut on the sea-shore, which had been erected by an adventurer, who came thither from Madras to express oil from the cocoa-nut. The scheme did not succeed; some of the party died, and the rest relinquished the project. Steering between the southern Cocoa, and the north end of the Island of Andaman, we opened Port Cornwallis on the east side of the latter. At eleven o'clock on the 5th, we hauled our wind and stood in; at one, our ship came to anchor, a quarter of a mile from the shore. On landing, we were received by Captains Ramsay and Stokoe (Colonel Kyd, the governor, being absent) with the kindest hospitality, which was equally extended to the captain and officers of the ship, and continued to every individual belonging to the mission, during the time that we remained their guests.

The settlement in Port Cornwallis is not situated on the principal island, but on a smaller one within the harbour, named by the English Chatham Island; the utmost length of which does not exceed two miles, and the breadth little more than half a mile. The southern extremity terminates in a narrow neck of land, fordable at low water to the main.

The Andaman Islands are a continuation of the Archipelago that extends from Cape Negrais to Atchein Head, stretching from 10° 32′ to 13° 40′ north latitude, and from 90° 6′ to 92° 59′ east longitude. What has been considered as the Great Andaman, is the most northern, about one hundred and forty miles in length, and not exceeding twenty broad. A separation, or strait, however, has late-

ly, owing to a fatal accident, * been discovered in this island, which, in fact, divides it into two, and opens a clear passage into the Bay of Bengal. The first settlement of the English was made in the year 1791, near the southern extremity of the island, in a bay on the east side; but it was afterwards removed in 1793, by advice of Admiral Cornwallis, to the place where it is now established. The original object of the undertaking was to procure a commodious harbour on the east side of the bay, to receive and shelter his Majesty's ships of war during the continuance of the north-east monsoon; it was also used as a place of reception for convicts sentenced for transportation from Bengal.

No writer of antiquity has transmitted a distinct account of the Andamans. They were included by Ptolemy, together with the Nicobars and lesser islands, in the general appellation of *insulæ bonæ fortunæ*, and supposed by him to be inhabited by a race of Anthropophagi. † The mild inoffensive

† In the month of February 1792, a vessel was freighted from Madras to carry stores to his Majesty's fleet at Andaman. The master, being unacquainted with the harbour, sent a small boat, in the afternoon, to explore an opening in the land, that appeared like the entrance. The boat stood in, it fell dark, and she was swept, by a rapid current, through a channel that divided the main island, and opened into the Bay of Bengal. The north-east monsoon prevailed with great violence. Unable to work against stream and wind, the boat was borne to leeward, and driven irresistibly into the Indian Ocean. Eighteen days afterwards she was picked up by a French ship, near the equinoctial line. The crew consisted of two Europeans and six Lascars; and, shocking to relate, when relieved by the French ship, three of the Lascars had been killed and eaten by their companions.

† Eusebius Renaudo, in his translation of the account given by two Mahommedan travellers, who journeyed east-

Nicobarians have long since been acquitted of the horrid imputation; but the different form, disposition, and habits of the few wretched savages who wander on the shores of the Andamans, may have given ground for a supposition that human flesh has been eaten by them. If so, it probably arose more from the impulse of excessive hunger, than from voluntary choice; a conclusion that well authenticated instances of the distress they at times endure appear to authorize.

In the evening we walked round the grounds that had been cleared, making a circuit of little more than a quarter of a mile, partly along the beach, and partly by a path leading through heaps of brushwood, and the trunks of huge trees that had recently been felled. A small garden, diligently tilled, produced but a scanty crop of Indian vegetables. A shallow soil, impregnated with leaves and decayed brushwood, washed down by the mountain streams, proved at first unfavourable to cultivation; the pains, however, which had been bestowed, seemed likely in the end to overcome this discouragement. The situation of the settlement on the side of a hill, rising abruptly from the verge of the sea, although calculated to avoid the unwholesome effects of stagnant waters, was yet at times attended with great inconvenience, owing to the impetuosity of the torrents.

Nothwithstanding the colony had been establish-

ward in the ninth century, says, 'Beyond these two islands (probably the Nicobars) lies the sea of Andaman. 'The people on this coast eat human flesh quite raw. 'Their complexion is black, their hair frizzled, their countenance and eyes frightful, their feet are very large, almost a cubit, and they go quite naked.'

ed on its present site little more than sixteen months, the habitations of the commandant and officers, and the huts of inferior classes, were rendered extremely comfortable: the first constructed of stone and planks, the latter of mats and clay, thatched with leaves of the rattan, or covered with boards. The surgeon had a separate dwelling assigned him, and there was likewise a commodious mess-room. The number of inhabitants altogether was about 700, including a company of sepoys as a guard over the convicts, and a defence to the settlement.

A situation more picturesque, or a view more romantic, than that which Chatham island and Cornwallis harbour present, can scarcely be imagined. Land-locked on all sides, nothing is to be seen but an extensive sheet of water, resembling a vast lake, interspersed with small islands, and environed by lofty mountains clothed with impenetrable forests. The scenery of nature, in this sequestrated spot, is uncommonly striking and grand.

All that voyagers have related of uncivilized life, seems to fall short of the barbarism of the people of Andaman. The ferocious natives of New Zealand, or the shivering half-animated savages of Terra del Fuego, are in a relative state of refinement, compared to these islanders.* The popu-

* Mr Marsden, in his excellent history of the Island of Sumatra, is of opinion, that the inhabitants of the Batta country, in the northern part of that island, eat human flesh; and the authorities on which he grounds his belief, seem to authenticate the fact. It does not, however, appear, that human flesh was substituted by them in place of ordinary food, but eaten rather as a barbarous ceremony, to indicate revenge on their enemies, or abhorrence of crimes, the only victims being prisoners taken in war, or capital convicts.

lation of the Great Andaman, and all its dependencies, does not, according to Captain Stokoe, exceed 2,000 or 2,500 souls. These are dispersed in small societies along the coasts, or on the lesser islands within the harbour, never penetrating deeper than the skirts of the forests, which hold out little inducement for them to enter, as they contain no animals to supply them with food. Their sole occupation seems to be that of climbing rocks, or roving along the margin of the sea in quest of a precarious meal of fish, which, during the tempestuous season, they often seek for in vain.

The Andamaners are not more favoured in the conformation of their bodies, than in the endowments of their minds. In stature, they seldom exceed five feet: their limbs are disproportionably slender, their bellies protuberant, with high shoulders and large heads; and, strange to find in this part of the world, they are a degenerate race of Negroes with woolly * hair, flat noses, and thick

* It is a matter of much curiosity to discover the origin of a race of people, so widely differing not only from all the inhabitants of that vast continent in the bosom of which the Island of Andaman is embayed, but also from the natives of the Nicobar Islands, which are immediately contiguous to it. Hitherto, the inquiries of travellers seem to have produced no satisfactory conclusion. Some have supposed that a Portuguese ship, early in the 16th century, laden with slaves from Mosambique, had been cast on these shores, and that the present Andamaners are the descendants of such as escaped drowning. This conjecture is proved to be grossly erroneous, from the account given by the two Mahommedan travellers, long anterior to the navigation of those seas by Europeans. The Arabians, however, who sailed on the Indian Ocean so early as the 7th century, and who not only explored the continent of India as far as the Chinese sea, but likewise gained a knowledge of most of the eastern islands, might, by an accident simi-

lips. Their eyes are small and red, their skin of a deep sooty black, whilst their countenances exhibit the extreme of wretchedness—a horrid mixture of famine and ferocity. They go quite naked, and are insensible of any shame from exposure. Two young women, allured by the temptation of fish, were secured, and brought on board a ship at anchor in the harbour. The captain treated them with great humanity. They soon got rid of all fear of violence, except what might be offered to their chastity, which they guarded with unremitting vigilance. Although they had a small apartment allotted to themselves, and had no real cause for apprehension, one always watched whilst the other slept. They suffered clothes to be put on, but took them off again as soon as opportunity offered, and threw them away as useless incumbrances. When their fears were over, they became cheerful, chattered with freedom, and were inexpressibly diverted at the sight of their own persons in a mirror. They were fond of singing, sometimes in melancholy recitative, at others in a lively key; and often danced about the deck with great agility, slapping their posteriors with the back of their heel. Wine and spirituous liquors were disagreeable to them. No food seemed so palatable as fish, rice, and sugar. In a few weeks, having recovered strength and become fat, from the more than half-famished state

lar to that which has been ascribed to the Portuguese vessel, have peopled Andaman with its present Negro race. It deserves remark, that on the continent of India extra Gangem, figures of Boodh, or Budhoo, the Gaudma of the Birmans and Siamese, are often seen with the charateristic hair and features of the Negro.

in which they were brought on board, they began to think confinement irksome, and longed to regain their native freedom. In the middle of the night, when all but the watchmen were asleep, they passed in silence through the captain's cabin, jumped out of the stern-windows into the sea, and swam to an island half a mile distant, where it was in vain to pursue them, had there been any such intention; but the object was to retain them by kindness, not by compulsion, an attempt that has failed on every trial. Hunger may (and these instances are rare) induce them to put themselves in the power of strangers; but the moment that want is satisfied, nothing short of coercion can prevent them from returning to a way of life more congenial to their savage nature. The few implements they use are of the rudest texture. A bow from four to five feet long, the string made of the fibre of a tree, or a slip of bamboo, with arrows of reed, headed with fish-bone, or wood hardened in the fire, is their principal weapon. Besides this, they carry a spear of heavy wood sharply pointed, and a shield made of bark to defend themselves from the assaults of their enemies; for even these poor wretches have rights to assert, and dignities to maintain. Necessity has taught them an expert management of their arms, on which they rely for subsistence. Happily for them, their numerous bays and creeks abound with fish, which they shoot and spear with surprising dexterity. They are said also to use a small hand-net, made of the filaments of bark. The fish when caught is put into a wicker basket, which they carry on their backs. Having kindled a fire, they throw the food on the coals, and devour it half broiled. A few diminutive

swine are to be found in the skirts of the forests, and among the mangrove thickets in the low grounds; but these are very scarce, and probably the progeny of a stock left by former navigators. When a native has the good fortune to slay one, he carfully preserves the skull and teeth to ornament his hut. They cross the bays, and go to fish either in canoes formed of a hollow tree, or on rafts of bamboo, which they direct by paddles. Their habitations display little more ingenuity than the dens of wild beasts. Four sticks stuck in the ground, are bound together at the top, and fastened transversly by others, to which branches of trees are suspended; an opening is left on one side, just large enough to admit of entrance. Leaves compose their bed. Being much incommoded by insects, their first occupation in a morning is to plaster their bodies all over with mud, which, hardening in the sun, forms an impenetrable armour. They paint their woolly heads with red ochre and water. When thus completely dressed, a more hideous appearance is not to be found in human form.

Their religion is the simple but genuine homage of nature to the incomprehensible Ruler of the universe, expressed in adoration to the Sun as the primary and most obvious source of good; to the Moon as the secondary power; and to the genii of the woods, the waters, and the mountains, as inferior agents. In the spirit of the storms, they confess the influence of a malignant being; and, during the south-west monsoon, when tempests prevail with unusual violence, they deprecate his wrath by wild chorusses, which they chant in small congregations assembled on the beach, or on some rock that overhangs the ocean. Of a future state,

it is not known that they have any idea, which possibly arises from our imperfect means of discovering their opinions. It affords, however, satisfactory reflection to find, among the most ignorant and barbarous of mankind, a confirmation of the great and pleasing truth, that all reasoning existence acknowledges a God. The half-humanized Andamaner invokes the luminaries that lend him light; and in that simple and spontaneous praise, he offers up the purest devotion of an unenlightened mind.

Although the principal food of the Andamaners consists of fish, yet they eagerly seize on whatever else presents itself. Lizards, guanas, rats and snakes, supply a change of repast. Birds are not numerous, and seldom come within reach; doves, parroquets, and the Indian crow, are the most common. Hawks are sometimes seen hovering over the tops of the trees; but they are only temporary visitors from the neighbouring continent. A few aquatic birds frequent the shores. Among these are the kingfisher, a sort of curlew, and the small sea-gull. Within the caverns and recesses of the rocks is found the salangane, or *hirundo nidis edulibus*, described by Monsieur Poivre. This bird, whose nest produces a high price in China, is perfectly black, and resembles a small martin. Its nest is thickly glazed with a mucilaginous substance, which the bird collects from the sea-blubber, and is said to swallow, and afterwards emit from the stomach. It is prized by the Chinese for its supposed medicinal and restorative qualities.

The vegetable diet of the Andamaners consists of the natural produce of the woods, in which the researches of Europeans find little that is palatable

or nutritious. The fruit of the mangrove is principally used, having often been found in their deserted habitations, steeping in an embanked puddle of water. As they have no pot * or vessel that can bear the action of fire, they cannot derive much advantage from such esculent herbs as the forests may contain. Indeed their extenuated and diseased figures too plainly indicate the want of wholesome nourishment. Unhappily for them, the cocoa-nut, which thrives in the utmost luxuriance in the neighbouring isles, is not to be found here. But they are extremely fond of it; and whenever a nut was left in their way by the settlers, it was immediately carried off with much apparent satisfaction. Captain Stokoe, who constantly resided on the island, disappointed in his attempts to establish a social intercourse, endeavoured to alleviate their wants, by sending, as often as circumstances would admit, small supplies of victuals to their huts, which were always abandoned on the approach of his people, but resorted to again when they had withdrawn. A party of fishers belonging to the settlement enticed a woman, by the allurement of food, to come so close, that she was made prisoner. Instead of relieving her hunger, they proceeded to offer violence. The cries of the poor creature brought a numerous troop of savage friends to her assistance, who, rushing out of the thickets, attacked and killed two of the yet more

* The fragments of earthen vessels mentioned by Mr Colebrooke were probably brought from the Nicobars, or from the continent, by the boats that often visit the Andamans for the purpose of taking the nests before mentioned.

savage aggressors. Their bodies * were afterwards found disfigured in a shocking manner. A coasting party one day discovered a man and a boy stretched on the beach, apparently in the last stage of famine. They were conveyed to the settlement. Unfortunately every effort of humanity failed to save the man; but the boy recovered, and is now in the service of Colonel Kyd at Calcutta, where he is much noticed for the striking singularity of his appearance.

The language of the Andamaners † has not been

* This circumstance rather seems to indicate that they are not cannibals. The bodies of the Bengal fishermen were pierced by sharp weapons, and pounded by stones until every bone was broken. But the flesh was not cut off, nor any limb severed.

† Specimen of the language of Andaman, from the 4th Vol. of the Asiatic Researches.

Andaman island or native country	*Mincopie*	Bow . .	*tongie*
		Bone . .	*geetongay*
		Cold . .	*choma*
Arrow . . .	*buttohie*	Door . .	*tang*
Arm . . .	*pilie*	To drink .	*meengohee*
Black . . .	*cheegheooga*	Ear . .	*quaka*
Blood . . .	*cochengohe*	Earth . .	*totongnangee*
To beat . .	*ingotaheya*	To eat .	*ingelholiah*
Belly . . .	*napoy*	Eye . .	*tubay*
Bird . . .	*lohay*	Finger .	*momay*
Boat . . .	*loccay*	Fire . .	*mona*
Fish . . .	*nabohee*	Rain . .	*oye*
Foot . . .	*gookee*	To sing .	*gokobay*
Head . . .	*tabay*	To sleep .	*comoha*
Hot . .	*hooloo*	Sky . .	*madama*
Knee . . .	*ingolay*	Star . .	*chelobay*
To laugh . .	*onkeomai*	Sun . .	*ahay*
Leg . . .	*chigie*	Teeth . .	*mahoy*
Man . . .	*camolan*	Water . .	*migway*
Moon . . .	*tabie*	Wind . .	*tomjamay*
Neck . . .	*tohie*	Wood . .	*tanghee*
Nose . . .	*mellee*		

discovered to possess the slightest affinity to any that is spoken in India, either continental or islandic. Captain Stokoe informed me, that what he heard was not at all harsh or disagreeable to the ear. Their songs are wildly melodious, and their gesticulation, whilst singing, is extremely impassioned. This is one among the many evidences to prove that poetry is coeval with the language of man.

The only quadrupeds seen on the island are hogs, rats, and the ichneumon. The guana also, of the lizard tribe, may be reckoned in this class; and these proved very destructive to poultry. There are also several species of snakes and scorpions. Labourers, whilst clearing away the underwood, were frequently bitten; but in no instance did the bite prove mortal, although the patients commonly fell into violent convulsions. Eau de luce and opium were the remedies in most cases administered.

During the prevalence of the north-east monsoon, fish is caught in great abundance; but in the tempestuous season it is difficult to be procured. Grey mullet, rock cod, skate, and soles, are among the best. Oysters have been found, but in no great quantity. The shores abound in a variety of beautiful shells, gorgonias, madreporas, murex, and cowries, with many other kinds, of which Captain Stokoe had made a curious and valuable collection.

There are several sorts of trees on the island; among which are, the *ficus religiosa*, or banyan tree, the almond tree, and the oil tree, which latter grows to a great height, and from it a very useful oil is thus produced. A horizontal incision

being made in the trunk, six or eight inches deep, a chip fourteen or fifteen inches long is cut at right angles, and the surface of the incision being hollowed and filled with live coals, the turpentine, or wood oil, exudes copiously from the top of the wound. The penaigre tree also is found, and is well adapted for the knees of ships; and the iron tree of stupendous size, whose timber almost bids defiance to the axe of the wood-cutter; the red-wood, which makes beautiful furniture, little inferior to fine mahogany. Beside these, there are numberless creepers and rattans which surround the stems of the larger trees, and, interwoven with each other, form so thick a hedge, that it is impossible to penetrate far into the forests, but by the slow and laborious process of cutting a road.

The first settlers in an uninhabited land have not only to contend against natural obstacles, and the want of several necessary comforts of life, but must likewise encounter the effects of an unwholesome atmosphere; for no country thoroughly agrees with the human constitution, until it is cleared and cultivated. The new colonists, notwithstanding every possible attention was paid to the preservation of their health, became sickly; they were afflicted, during the four dry months, December, January, February, and March, with the scurvy. This complaint, however, was owing to a change of food, and a want of vegetable diet. As soon as the rains commenced, it mitigated, and quickly disappeared; but it gave way to a dreadful successor, the intermittent fever and ague, which baffled all power of medicine. An induration and enlargement of the spleen, a disease well known in India by the name of Boss, was gene-

rally its concomitant. The cause of these fevers, being local, could not be remedied. Situated in the full sweep of the south-west monsoon, and the clouds being obstructed by high mountains, the island is, for eight months in the year, washed by incessant torrents. According to a meteorological table kept by Captain Stokoe, there appears to have fallen in seven months, ninety-eight inches of water, a quantity far exceeding what I had ever heard of in any other country.

CHAPTER VII.

SAIL FROM THE ANDAMANS—MAKE THE ISLAND OF NARCONDAM—ARRIVE AT THE MOUTH OF THE RANGOON RIVER—DELAYED FOR A PILOT—PROCEED—PRECAUTION OF A CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICER—A DEPUTATION FROM RANGOON MEETS THE SEAHORSE—SINGULAR APPEARANCE OF THE DEPUTIES—ARRIVE AT RANGOON, EXTRAORDINARY CONDUCT OF THE GOVERNMENT—UNCOMFORTABLE BUILDING ALLOTTED FOR OUR RESIDENCE—RESTRICTION IMPOSED ON OUR PEOPLE—COMMANDERS AND CREWS OF THE SHIPS IN THE RIVER PROHIBITED FROM HOLDING ANY INTERCOURSE WITH THE SEA-HORSE—SITUATION UNPLEASANT, AND DEGRADING—REMONSTRATE—DECLARE MY INTENTION TO WITHDRAW—CONCESSION ON THE PART OF THE RANGOON GOVERNMENT.

HAVING passed five days in this wild sequestered abode, where the novelty of the scene, and the friendly attention of our entertainers, Captains Ramsay and Stokoe, would have rendered a longer stay agreeable, we prepared to depart. The Hin-

doos, whose religion forbids them to drink water drawn by impure hands, had filled their own casks; and the stock of our numerous company was replenished. On the 10th, we reembarked, and stood to sea. Next morning at day-light made the island of Narcondam, about twenty leagues east of the Andamans; a barren rock, rising abruptly out of the ocean, uninhabited, and seemingly destitute of vegetation. The wind being foul, we were obliged to tack; and on the following day we had advanced so little to the northward, that Narcondam was still in sight. About noon, we discovered two ships and a schooner standing to the south-east. They hoisted English colours, and we kept our course. On the 13th, the wind veered to the southward, and became fair. On the 16th, we found ourselves, by a meridian observation, nearly in the latitude of the roads of Rangoon, but by our reckoning and time-piece too far to the eastward. After steering west some hours, we anchored for the night in five fathoms, and plainly perceived lights on the beach. Next morning we discovered low land, about six miles to the north-west. Here we remained till the 18th, waiting for a pilot, standing off and on with short tacks in the day-time, and at anchor during the night. Finding that our signals, by firing guns and hoisting colours in the usual manner, were not answered, Mr Palmer, the second officer, was sent in the pinnace, with instructions to proceed up the river as far as Rangoon, in case he did not find a pilot sooner. On the ensuing day, the wind being moderate and fair, Captain Thomas ventured to stand in; and steering by land-marks, and sending a boat a-head, crossed the bar without a pilot;

at half-flood, in four fathoms. At twelve o'clock, we entered the Rangoon river. The land on each side appeared low and swampy, and the banks skirted with high reeds and brushwood. Four miles within the extremes, we came abreast of a small village, whence a boat rowed towards us. It proved to be a watch-boat, stationed at the mouth of the river, to send intelligence of the arrival of vessels to the nearest guard, whence it is forwarded to the Governor of Rangoon. The Birman officer that came on board was a mean-looking man, dressed in a shabby cotton jacket, and a piece of faded silk, which, after twice encircling his waist, was passed loosely between his legs, and fastened behind, covering the thighs about half-way to the knees. This personage, in his own opinion of no small consequence, sat down on a chair, * without the smallest ceremony, and called, in an authoritative tone, for his implements of writing, which were produced by one of three attendants that accompanied him. These, when their master was seated, squatted upon their heels on the deck before his chair, attentive only to his commands, in an attitude and manner very much resembling baboons, although they were well-proportioned strong men. The officer inquired, in broken Portuguese, the name of the ship, whence she came, what arms and ammunition were on board, and the name of the commander: being satisfied in these points, he carefully committed them to writing. Hearing that we were not pro-

* We were not aware that a sitting posture is the most respectful among the Birmans; and, on this occasion, were inclined to attribute to insolence, what, if it had any meaning, was in fact a mark of deference.

vided with a pilot, he desired the captain to come to an anchor till one could be procured; as, in case of any accident happening, he would be held responsible for permitting us to proceed. Just then, Mr Palmer, in the ship's boat, made his appearance. He had been to Rangoon, and brought down a pilot with him. Our cautious visitor offered no farther objections, but took his leave with as little ceremony as he had entered.

About two o'clock, a small boat from Rangoon met the ship. A man in it hailed our pilot in the language of Hindostan, and desired him to cast anchor, as it was the intention of the governor of Rangoon to come down and receive the British deputation in person. We immediately complied with his desire.

The place where we brought-to is twelve miles from Rangoon. The entrance of the river, and the banks on each side, bore a near resemblance to those of the Ganges; but the navigation is much more commodious. The channel is bold and deep; from six and a half to eight fathoms, uninterrupted by shoals or inequality of soundings. Mr Wood judged the river, at this place, to be from three-quarters to a mile in breadth. We continued at anchor till next day, in expectation of the promised visit. About noon the fleet came in sight: it consisted of from twenty to thirty boats. On a nearer approach, only four out of the number seemed to belong to persons of superior condition. These were not unlike, in form, to the drawings of the state-canoes of some of the South Sea Islands. They were long and narrow, with an elevated stern, ornamented with peacocks'

feathers and the tails of Thibet cows. Each boat bore a different flag, and had a long, flexible, painted pole, with a gilded ball at the extremity, protruding horizontally from the stern. Three persons, apparently of higher rank, came on board. They meant to be civil, but were perfectly free from restraint, and took possession of chairs without waiting for any invitation, or paying the smallest regard to those who were not seated; whilst their attendants, seemingly as much at ease as their masters, formed a semicircle around them on the deck, in like manner as the servants of our former visitor. Being as yet unapprised of the external forms of respect among them, such conduct surprised us a good deal. The chief of the three, a good-looking young man, of short stature, I understood to be a person of consideration. He was Governor of the province of Dalla, on the opposite side of the river to Rangoon, which he held on the part of the mother of the Queen, whose jaghire, or estate, it is. The second, an elderly plain man, said he was Nak-haan-gee; literally, the royal ear. I was afterwards informed he was transmitter of intelligence, or reporter, to the Imperial court—an office of much confidence. The third, a Seree, an inferior secretary, was a man of little relative importance compared with the other two. We conversed for an hour, through the medium of an interpreter who spoke the language of Hindostan. They were extremely inquisitive, and asked a number of questions concerning the objects of the mission, which were answered in friendly, but general terms. Having paid their compliments, they arose to depart, and returned to their boats, making lavish professions

of friendship; and whilst the ship sailed before a gentle breeze they rowed with great velocity round her, performing a variety of evolutions, and exhibiting considerable skill in the management of their vessels, which were of unequal dimensions, from twenty-eight to forty oars: we judged the longest to be between sixty and seventy feet, and from six to eight in breadth. In this manner we proceeded until the town and shipping were in view. The Princess Royal East Indiaman, that had come from Madras for a cargo of timber, fired a salute to the Company's colours; and the Seahorse paid a compliment, to the battery on shore, of eleven guns, which were returned by an equal number. The pilot came-to below the town, apart from the other ships about half a mile. As soon as the Seahorse dropped anchor, all the boats withdrew without further notice or explanation.

Being desirous of sending some of our attendants on shore to refresh themselves, particularly the Hindoos, whose religion enjoins them not to eat victuals dressed on board, and who were on that account put to great inconvenience, being obliged at sea to subsist on dried fruits, sweetmeats, and parched pulse—I sent one of the attendants to the Governor of Dalla, to acquaint him with my wish. He, in reply, desired that I would defer landing till the following day, when a habitation that was preparing for our reception would be in readiness. With this request I acquiesced, and communicated the same to Captain Thomas, and the gentlemen of the deputation, who forbade their servants to leave the ship without express permission.

About five o'clock in the afternoon the interpreter returned on board, and informed me, that

the raywoon, or governor of the town, meant to wait on me next day at the dwelling assigned to us; intimating also, that he was ordered to remain on board to receive my commands. This plea of attention was probably only a cloak to cover another motive: his business seemed to be rather to watch our motions, and learn our views, than to obviate inconveniences, or manifest respect. He spoke the Hindoo language fluently; and I desired the Moonshee, a discreet and sensible man, to entertain him. The night passed without any communication with the shore, or with the other ships in the river.

Next morning, the 21st, at ten o'clock, the Seree, or under-secretary, came on board, accompanied by a man of Portuguese extraction, who spoke very imperfect English. The Seree told me he was about to depart for Pegue, charged with despatches for the Maywoon, or Viceroy; and requested to know whether we had any commands. I replied in the affirmative; adding, that it was my wish to send a confidential person to his Excellency, to deliver to him a letter from the Governor-general of India, and another from myself. The Seree, finding I would not intrust my despatches to him, promised to call at noon, and convey my messenger to Pegue (about ninety miles distant) in his own boat; a promise which he omitted to perform.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, Mr Wood, Dr Buchanan, and myself, landed, and were conducted to a spacious temporary building which had been prepared for our reception. It was situated on the verge of the river, about 500 yards below the town, opposite to where the Seahorse was

moored. It consisted of only one story, raised three feet from the ground, supported on posts driven into the earth; an elevation very necessary to the comfort of its inhabitants, as the high spring tides washed the foundation pillars, and almost insulated the building, by filling a channel which the rains had excavated. This edifice, about ninety feet in length, was entirely composed of bamboos and strong cane mats, and divided into several compartments. The roof was lofty, and covered with the same materials, which were laid in such a manner as to afford protection from rain, and shade from the sun. The floor, a bamboo grating, was likewise spread with mats; and in one apartment small carpets were laid, doubtless designed as a mark of distinction. On landing, we were received by the Seree, who made a frivolous excuse for not having called according to his promise, saying, that another person had been sent in his stead. On entering the virando, or balcony, we were saluted by the sounds of very discordant music, issuing from the instruments of a band of musicians that had been sent by the governor to welcome us. To these he had obligingly added a set of dancing girls and tumbling boys, who exhibited a variety of movements in attitudes, some of which were not ungraceful. Having dismissed this noisy assemblage, and taken a cursory view of our habitation, we were unanimous in opinion, that for the present it would be more advisable and more commodious to sleep on board, at least for that night, as we had brought no conveniences on shore with us. Leaving therefore part of the guard and a few of our attendants to occupy

the house, we returned at dusk, and passed the night on board the Seahorse, better lodged, and much more comfortably, than if we had continued in our new dwelling.

Surprise and disappointment were a good deal excited, to find, that during all this time, not a boat of any description came to our ship, either from the English merchantmen in the river, or from shore; a circumstance that bore the appearance of distrust and prohibition on the part of the government. Captain Thomas therefore ordered his pinnace to be launched, and rowed to the nearest vessel. Being informed that the commander was on shore, he directed his boat to the town quay, and, landing without ceremony, proceeded to the residence of a gentleman with whom he was acquainted, where he met several masters of merchant ships, who informed him, that they had received an order from the Rhoom, or public court in which the council of government assembled, enjoining them not to go on board the Seahorse themselves, or suffer any intercourse with their ships, as matters of etiquette had not yet been adjusted; but added, sailor-like, that they had agreed to ask permission next morning to pay their respects to the representative of their nation, and, if refused, to go without permission; a resolution from which Captain Thomas prudently dissuaded them, saying, that they could not more oblige the person they meant to honour, than by an implicit compliance with the wishes of the Birman government.

On the following morning, Captain Thomas and the gentlemen of the deputation accompanied me on shore to our habitation. We found no person

of distinguished consequence there; but crowds of the lower class, both men and women, were collected from curiosity. In a short time several baskets were brought, with the raywoon's or governor's compliments, containing venison, ducks, chickens, bread, and roots. The same company of musicians that had performed on the preceding day, attended to amuse us. At twelve o'clock the approach of a person of condition was announced, when a tall elderly man, of a graceful appearance, followed by several attendants, was ushered in, under the title of Baba-Sheen, whose manners were easy and respectful. After informing me, through the medium of a Portuguese interpreter, that he was second in authority at Rangoon, and held the office of Ackawoon, he apologized for the absence of the raywoon, or governor of the town, who, he said, was prevented from waiting on me by indisposition; and added, that he would be happy to show me every attention in his power. I expressed my sense of his politeness; remarking, that my wants were confined to permission to purchase a few necessaries, and the means of sending a messenger to the viceroy of Pegue, with a letter from the Governor-general of India, and one from myself, which I was desirous should be delivered as speedily as possible. To this he replied, that he would forward by express any commands I might have; observing, that it was an useless trouble to send a servant of my own. His meaning was obvious; and as this was his first visit, which might be considered rather as ceremonious, than as intended to discuss business, I did not press the matter farther. Being, however, determined not to protract the purposes of the mission

longer than was necessary, I acquainted him, that Mr Wood would return his visit the same evening; after which, I would converse with him further on the objects of the deputation. He endeavoured to wave the visit, by saying it might put Mr Wood to an inconvenience; but that it was his duty to wait on me, which he would do at any time, on the shortest notice, either on board the ship, or at our habitation. In the course of conversation he informed me, that, though a native of the Birman country, he was of Armenian extraction, and professed belief in our Saviour. We parted about two o'clock, and at his desire, my moonshee wrote a list of such articles as we stood in need of, and tendered payment before hand—an offer which was declined. As our baggage and necessaries had not yet been disembarked, we returned to dine on board. Early in the afternoon, the Ackawoon's boat was perceived rowing towards the house, with design, as we imagined, to prevent by anticipation the promised visit. Captain Thomas ordered his barge to be manned, and accompanied me on shore. To this interview Baba-Sheen brought with him, as interpreter, a Mussulman merchant, who spoke Persian tolerably well, through whom I was enabled to convey my sentiments with more ease than at our former meeting.

After an interchange of compliments, I told him, that the friendly inclinations which had long subsisted between the British Government in India, and his Birman majesty, had been a source of so much satisfaction to the Governor-general of India, that, with a view to perpetuate an union mutually advantageous to both countries, he had deputed me, in the character of public minister, and

a confidential person, to strengthen the bonds of amity, by the delivery of friendly letters; and to offer, in his name, assurances of a perfect regard. In proof of this, I had brought certain products of our country, which, together with the letters, I was charged to present in person to his majesty at Ava, and to the viceroy of Pegue. That, coming in such a capacity, I felt much chagrined at finding, on the part of the Rangoon government, an apparent want of confidence, for which I could assign no cause; and experiencing a degree of restraint, imposed on myself and my people, very inconsistent with what I expected. That I could no otherwise account for such conduct, than by attributing it either to their misunderstanding my intentions, or my own want of knowledge of their customs; that I wished exceedingly to ascribe it to the latter, but found it difficult to persuade myself that such obvious marks of distrust could be altogether matter of form without any other meaning.

To this the interpreter replied on the part of his superior, in a very verbose and affected style, that nothing was farther from the intention of Baba-Sheen and the council of Rangoon, than to give umbrage or offer disrespect; that it was the custom of their nation; and that the restraint which was now so irksome to me, would, he had no doubt, speedily be removed. I replied, that it was my earnest desire to manifest my regard for the Birman government, by acquiescing in every ceremonial that their customs prescribed for persons in the capacity I held, provided such ceremonials were not derogatory from the dignity of the State I represented. But there was one point

in which the conduct of the council of Rangoon could not be justified, under any plea of form or custom; this was, the interdiction laid on the captains of the English ships in the river against going on board the Seahorse, to pay me that mark of respect to which he well knew I was entitled, as agent from the English government, and which those gentlemen were solicitous to offer me in that character. That this prohibition, contrary to the usage of all civilized states, was too disrespectful to be passed over in silence, and could only arise from unworthy suspicions, or from an intention to give offence. I desired that he would favour me with an explanation of such extraordinary and unexpected treatment.

To this requisition Baba-Sheen replied in vague and unsatisfactory language; assuring me, that what had been done was only in conformity to long established usage, which he begged I would not take amiss, or consider in a mistaken point of view. That if I would intrust my letters for the viceroy to him, he would forward them by a safe messenger, who would return in two or three days, and probably bring with him an invitation from his excellency to pay him a visit at Pegue, whither he should have the honour to attend me.

Being furnished with duplicates of all my official papers, and apprised that the letter from the Governor-general to the viceroy was merely complimentary, I thought it a fit opportunity to manifest a confidence in him, in the hope that it might produce a liberal return. I therefore told him, that although it was contrary to our practice to intrust official papers to other than a confidential servant, yet, to manifest the reliance I had on his good will,

I would take upon me, in the present case, to wave all form, and with pleasure commit to him the delivery of the letter from the governor general, together with one from myself. During this conference. I discovered that Baba-Sheen understood my meaning in Persian, although he could not himself speak it. He, however, spoke the language of Hindostan in an imperfect manner, but sufficient to express intelligibly what he wished to convey, and we soon understood each other so well, as no longer to stand in need of an interpreter. It was now late, and he took his leave, with lavish professions of respect and good inclination.

The delicacy of my present situation caused me to consider seriously on what were the most eligible steps to pursue. The vigilant suspicion with which I was guarded, and the restriction, little short of imprisonment, imposed on myself and my attendants, aggravated by the humiliating prohibition against holding any intercourse with my own countrymen, seemed to augur an unfavourable issue to the mission, and were sufficient to warrant my availing myself of a clause in my instructions, that gave me a discretionary power to return, without further explanation, in case I judged it expedient. Reflecting, however, that to withdraw in disgust, before I had further communication with higher authority, would, in the present stage of the business, only serve to confirm their suspicions, and substantiate that jealousy which it was the primary object of the mission to remove; adverting also to the probability, that the persons who ruled at Rangoon were inimical to the deputation, as inconsistent with their own interests, and perhaps were ignorant and at a loss how to act; and weighing

these considerations, together with the ceremonious and respectful manner in which the deputation had been received on its first arrival, I judged it most prudent to submit, for some time longer, to the irksomeness of my situation, rather than take a step so decided as to exclude every avenue of future communication.

This morning I went on shore to our habitation, accompanied by Captain Thomas and Dr Buchanan. We remained till noon, and returned to the ship without seeing any person of note. Wherever we directed our steps, three or four Birman sentinels followed us closely. Whilst we were at the house, a present of milk, venison, fowls and vegetables, came from the governor; and eleven baskets of rice, with a large tub of gee, * were sent on board the Seahorse for the use of the people. Payment was offered, but positively refused; the messenger saying he was instructed to receive my commands for whatever necessaries we might require. Not any person belonging to the mission was yet allowed to enter the town, or purchase articles at the market; nor could a servant go to a well a few yards from our dwelling to fetch water, without the attendance of a Birman sentinel. No country boat was suffered to approach us, nor did any intercourse pass between the Seahorse and the vessels in the river.

In this state of unpleasant restraint we passed the 24th and 25th. Our excursions from the ship extended no farther than the insulated habitation. Every morning the usual present for our table was regularly brought, to which was sometimes added

* Clarified butter.

fish of a good quality, that which is called in Bengal the sable fish. On the morning of the 26th I went on shore at an early hour, accompanied by Doctor Buchanan. The spring-tides, which prevailed since the time of our arrival, had now subsided, and left a dry foot-path in the rear of the house, across the water-course that surrounded it, thereby opening a free communication with the country. Dr Buchanan and myself took the liberty to pass the boundary for the first time. When the Birman sentinels perceived our intention, they consulted together, as we imagined, whether or not they should interpose and prevent us. They however contented themselves with following us, and vigilantly observing all our actions. Passing over some dry rice grounds, we reached the place where the ceremony of burning the dead is usually performed. Whilst we were examining the ruins of a decayed temple, a messenger came to inform me that Baba-Sheen had arrived at the house. We immediately went back, and found him waiting for us. After the usual salutation, I asked him if the courier he had despatched to Pegue was returned? He answered in the affirmative; and added, that as the letters contained nothing more than a notification of my arrival, and customary compliments, the viceroy had sent a verbal reply, to signify that he would be glad to see me and the rest of the English gentlemen at Pegue; at the same time commanding him to provide suitable boats, and every requisite for our journey, which Baba-Sheen said would be in readiness in two or three days; and that it was his intention to precede us, in order to

make the necessary arrangements for our reception. This intimation was answered on my part with a cool acknowledgment of the viceroy's civility. After expressing my surprise that he had not written either to notify having received the Governor-general's letter, or to desire our company, I added, that my paying a visit to his excellency was a matter which could not at that time be determined. Baba-Sheen hoped that no impediment might arise to prevent it, and begged to be favoured with a sight of the presents intended for the viceroy. I promised to gratify his wish, provided he would come on board the Seahorse. He appointed the following morning, and took his leave. In this visit he was accompanied by the Nakhaan, or news-writer, before mentioned.

At nine o'clock in the morning Baba-sheen came on board. We were likewise honoured by the visit of an unexpected personage. The Raywoon, or governor, who had before excused himself on account of indisposition, found his health sufficiently mended to venture to the ship, and by his looks plainly evinced that he had not been long an invalid. His appearance bespoke him sixty years of age. His dress was military. He carried a sword, and wore a tight coat of European broad cloth, with gold buttons of a conical form. A fillet of muslin surrounded his head. A piece of chequered Pegue silk was wrapped round his waist, and half concealed his thighs. On his feet he wore the sandals of Pegue, which resemble those used by the Sepoys of India. He was attended by seven or eight servants armed with sabres, one of whom carried a painted box containing beetle leaf and areca nut, an-

other his writing materials, and a third a flaggon of water, on the neck of which was suspended a large gold cup, that served as a cover to the flaggon, and a vessel to drink out of. All these, I afterwards understood, were appendages of his dignity, as well as articles of convenience. After a slight obeisance, (for the Birmans are not ceremonious in their salutations), he sat down on a chair placed on the quarter-deck, and in his conversation displayed more knowledge than I had as yet discovered in any of his countrymen. He informed me, that his name was Seree Nunda Kiouza; that he had commanded the troops which first entered the British territories, and met General Erskine on the borders of Chittagong, mentioning circumstances that left no room to doubt his veracity. He seemed exceedingly pleased to hear that the fugitive delinquents had been given up to the justice of their country; and expressed himself in handsome terms of General Erskine, whose moderation and good sense, he observed, prevented the effusion of much blood; intimating also great doubt as to what might have been the issue of the contest, had matters been pushed to extremity. Of this little ebullition of vanity I took no notice, and, at the request of Baba-Sheen, ordered the presents designed for the viceroy to be displayed. They consisted of several pieces of gold, silver, and plain muslin, three pieces of broad cloth, a piece of velvet, and one of flowered satin, a high finished fowling-piece, a corabah of Persian rose-water, specimens of cut-glass, and some smaller articles. Our visitants examined them with close attention. One of their attendants wrote an inventory on the spot, and, I afterwards understood,

calculated the value of each distinct article.* The Raywoon expressing approbation of the cloth, particularly that of a blue colour, I requested permission to send a piece to his house. He returned a civil answer, in general terms, without either declining or accepting my offer. After some unimportant conversation, they withdrew; and at my desire, Captain Thomas saluted the Raywoon with seven guns. Shortly afterwards, I sent a servant to him with compliments, and the piece of cloth I had promised, which, to my no small surprise, he declined, and returned by the same messenger, apologizing for his refusal, by saying, that certain reasons prevented him at that time from receiving my present. For this ambiguous conduct I could no otherwise account, than by ascribing it to that suspicious distrust which was so plainly indicated in all the actions of this singular people.

The circumstances that I have related, together with many other petty marks of authorized disrespect from different quarters, determined me to come to a full and satisfactory eclaircissement with the government of Rangoon, before I would consent to visit the viceroy at Pegue. In pursuance of this resolution, I sent early in the morning to Baba-Sheen, desiring to see him as soon as convenient. He came to the house about ten o'clock. After recapitulating the various causes of umbrage which had been given me, I added, that all these reasons combined, which were still further strength-

* Similar curiosity was expressed by the mandarines at Canton, to learn, from the India Company's Commissioners, the particulars and value of the presents that were brought by Lord Macartney, for the Emperor of China. *Sir George Staunton's Embassy, Vol. I. chap. 9th.*

ened by the viceroy's having returned a vague and verbal reply to the Governor-general's letter, contrary to their known usage, rendered it impossible for me to proceed to Pegue, until he should explain the motives of such mysterious conduct; and I desired, that if any doubts were entertained respecting the objects of my mission, or the nature of my designs, he would express himself freely, and give me an opportunity, by removing them, to undeceive their government. He replied, as usual, in equivocal terms, and by an assurance that it was no more than what was conformable to custom. I said that I was sorry for it, as our customs were so incompatible with theirs; that I could not, consistent with what I owed to the dignity of my own government, longer submit to my present situation; that as their forms and ours differed so widely, and, from what he said, were not likely to correspond, without a derogatory concession on one part or the other, there was no help for it. We could not apply the remedy, and should part as we had met, on terms of mutual good will and friendship. As I had thus far acquiesced, Baba-Sheen did not expect that matters would take such a turn. Intelligence of my arrival had been forwarded to the court, and the authors of my departure would be subject to its displeasure. He appeared alarmed, and earnestly asked—"What is it you desire?" I replied, immediate release from all personal restraint; that the spies which were stationed on board the Seahorse, and the sentinels that accompanied every boat that left or came to the ship should be removed; that my servants should have the same

liberty that the servants of other strangers enjoyed, with leave to purchase what they wanted; that boats from the shipping in the river should have free access, and the commanders permission to visit me; that Mr Wood should have safe conduct to the viceroy of Pegue, to receive in person either a verbal acknowledgment of the Governor-general's letter, and an invitation to me to visit Pegue, or bring with him a written reply. That unless these reasonable requisitions were acceded to, I must beg leave to depart, which I should do on the most amicable terms; and only regret that the public character I had the honour to fill, did not admit of concessions on my part which would be considered as humiliating by my countrymen. To this Baba-Sheen answered in his former strain, endeavouring to amuse me by a story quite impertinent to the subject. I told him it was very well. The English and Birman nations, I hoped, would long continue to maintain a friendly intercourse; at the same time begged to be favoured with his commands to Calcutta. He then entreated of me to lay aside my intention, and assigned as a reason for the viceroy's not writing, that he had no person with him who understood either Persian or English. This was not true; for I knew that the Mussulman merchant, who interpreted on the 22d, carried the letters * to him, in order to explain them. Finding that I was determined, he said he would consult the Raywoon, and give me a reply in the afternoon. He then took his leave.

* The letters of the Governor-general to the Emperor and the viceroy, were written in Birman, Persian, and English. I always wrote in Persian, and in English.

At four o'clock, Mr Wood and myself met the Raywoon and Baba-Sheen at our habitation. They came accompanied by a numerous train of followers. Among others, the Nak-haan attended, to listen to, and note the conversation. At this interview every persuasive art was used to prevail on me to forego my intention of departure, without their assenting to my propositions. They even condescended to ask it as a favour. I, however, continued inflexible. At their desire, I recapitulated the terms on which alone I would consent to remain. After talking for three hours to no purpose, and offering to yield in some things, they at length agreed to give up every point. Mr Wood was to accompany Baba-Sheen to Pegue; the captains of the English ships were to have free access; our attendants liberty to purchase what they wanted, and to go where they pleased; the spies stationed on board the Seahorse were to be removed, and boats suffered to pass from the ship to the shore without a Birman sentinel. These matters being stipulated, and a punctual performance solemnly promised, I relinquished my design of going away for the present, and we parted with apparent contentment and good humour on both sides.

The morning of the 29th produced a satisfactory adjustment of every point in contention, by an unqualified acquiescence on the part of the Rangoon government, to my several requisitions. At ten o'clock the captains of the principal English ships in the river visited me at the house, accompanied by Baba-Sheen. The spies were withdrawn from the ship, and our people permitted to go to the Bazar, or market, without molestation.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSENT TO GO TO PEGUE BEFORE THE RETURN OF MR WOOD—SUSPICIONS OF THE BIRMANS AWAKENED BY DESIGNING PERSONS—HOSPITABLE RECEPTION EXPERIENCED BY FOREIGN MERCHANTS AT RANGOON—CHARACTERS OF MEN IN OFFICE—ARTS USED TO COUNTERACT THE ENGLISH DEPUTATION—MR WOOD DEPARTS FROM RANGOON—POLITENESS OF THE RAYWOON—EMBARK FOR PEGUE—BRING-TO DURING THE EBB OF TIDE—APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRY—FIND THE REMAINS OF TWO DEER, HALF DEVOURED BY TIGERS—RICH SOIL—COUNTRY DESTITUTE OF POPULATION, AND INFESTED BY WILD BEASTS.

At the earnest solicitation of Baba-Sheen, I consented to embark for Pegue on the 31st of March, and not wait the return of Mr Wood, as I had at first intended. The annual festival at the great temple of Pegue was about to be celebrated with sumptuous magnificence; and the viceroy had expressed a particular desire that the English gentlemen should witness the rejoicings. I told Baba-Sheen that I would relinquish my original determination on this point, as a mark of my confidence

in him, and perfect conviction of the friendly inclinations of the viceroy.

Previous to this amicable termination of a disagreement which at first bore an inauspicious appearance, I had conjectured what were the real motives of their distrust, and my conclusions afterwards proved to be rightly founded. Pride, the natural characteristic of the Birmans, was inflamed by the arts of designing men, and suspicion was awakened by misrepresentation. The Birmans, sensible of the advantages of commerce, but inexpert in the practice, desirous to improve, but unacquainted with the principles of trade, had of late years given toleration to all sects, and invited strangers of every nation to resort to their ports; and being themselves free from those prejudices of cast which shackle their Indian neighbours, they permitted foreigners to intermarry and settle amongst them. But their country had been so much harassed by wars with neighbouring nations, and torn by revolts and domestic dissensions, that trade was frequently interrupted, and sometimes entirely stopped; property was rendered insecure, and even the personal safety of settlers endangered. During the short intervals of tranquillity, obscure adventurers, and outcasts from all countries of the East, had flocked to Rangoon, where they were received with hospitality by a liberal nation. Among these, the industrious few soon acquired wealth by means of their superior knowledge. The Parsees, the Armenians, and a small proportion of Mussulmen, engrossed the largest share of the trade of Rangoon; and individuals from their number were frequently selected by government to fill employments of trust that related to trade and

transactions with foreigners, the duties of which the Birmans supposed that such persons could perform better than themselves. Baba-Sheen, born in the Birman country, of Armenian parents, had obtained the high office he held by his skill in business and his general knowledge. The descendant of a Portuguese family, named Jaunsee, whose origin was very low, and who, in the early part of his life, had been accused as accessary to the piratical seizure of an English vessel, was invested with the important office of Shawbunder, or intendant of the port, and receiver of the port customs. This man appeared to perform the duties of his station with diligence. The town of Rangoon was indebted to his activity for the pavement of its streets, for several well built wooden bridges, and a wharf, which, extending into the river, and raised on posts, enabled the ships to deliver and receive cargoes without the assistance of river craft. Under his direction also, a spacious customhouse had lately been erected. This is the only lay building in Rangoon that is not constructed of wood. It is composed of brick and mortar, and the roof covered with tiles. Within, there are a number of wooden stages for the reception of bale goods. Notwithstanding the respect which the energy of Jaunsee's character had obtained, the Birmans were by no means insensible of the meanness of his extraction. His want of education was a matter of derision among them. Although an inhabitant of the Birman country near forty years, and a great part of the time an officer of government, he could neither read nor write, and even spoke their language imperfectly. We were unfortunate in his happening to be at Ava at

the time of our arrival, whither he had gone to render up his annual accounts. Had he been on the spot, it is probable he would have obviated several of the inconvenient circumstances attending our first introduction.

The character of Baba-Sheen was strikingly contrasted with that of the Shawbunder. He was a man of general knowledge, and deemed by the Birmans an accomplished scholar. He was better acquainted with the history, politics, and geography of Europe, than any Asiatic I ever conversed with. His learning was universal, being slightly versed in almost every science; but his information, extensive as it was, although it gained him employment, could not procure him confidence. He was said to be deficient in other essential requisites.

Several private merchants had also acquired influence in Rangoon. Bawangee, a Parsee of considerable credit, had interest to procure a partial mitigation of duties on his merchandise, in consideration of supplying annually a certain number of firelocks for the royal arsenal. Jacob Aguizar, an Armenian, to whom I had letters of credit, dealt largely in foreign commodities. These people naturally behold with a jealous eye any advance of a commercial nature, that may tend to diminish their influence, and deprive them of that dictatorial power, which they assume and exercise over all merchants and mariners that resort to Rangoon: But of none are they so apprehensive as of the English, a connection with whom might teach the Birmans to transact foreign business without their assistance, and give them a more adequate sense of their own interests. Under these fears they had long been

disseminating the seeds of suspicion, and warning the Birmans to be on their guard against British fraud, as well as British force; but no sooner did they hear of the present deputation, than the alarm-bell was sounded from all quarters. They represented (as I was credibly informed) our designs to be of the most mischievous tendency; and even endeavoured to work on the superstition of the people, by the solemn promulgation of a prophecy, that in less than twelve months the English colours would fly on the Rangoon flag-staff. These artifices, which were not now practised for the first time, although they could not deceive the Birmans, it is probable were not altogether void of effect; nor is it to be wondered at, that our reception, —though respectful from the deputation that came down to meet us, was not perfectly cordial. There is also reason to conclude, that the provincial officers of Rangoon knew not in what manner they ought to act, not having received precise instructions for the regulation of their conduct towards us in matters of ceremony.

Conformably to our recent arrangement, Mr Wood left us on the preceding night, and accompanied by Baba-Sheen, set out for Pegue in a commodious boat, well protected from the weather. This day the captains of the principal ships in the river dined with me on shore. The Raywoon, knowing that I was to have company, sent a whole antelope, with Indian vegetables in abundance; and acquainted me, that boats would be in readiness for us on the following day at noon, as I had promised to leave Rangoon by the evening's tide.

The morning of the following day was spent in preparation for our journey to Pegue. Having

now come to a right understanding with persons in power, I did not scruple to send on shore part of my heavy baggage, which was deposited in the house, under charge of three soldiers, and some servants, whom we were obliged to leave behind on account of indisposition. The presents for his Majesty were not taken out of the ship, as many of the articles were of a brittle nature, and liable to injury from removal. I likewise drew up a short letter of instructions for Captain Thomas, leaving him in most cases a latitude to act from the dictates of his own discretion, on which I knew I might with safety rely; at the same time I pointed out the propriety of using every means to conciliate the inhabitants, and cautioned him to repress, in his European crew, that thoughtless intemperance which is the characteristic of British seamen when they get on shore.

About noon, three boats were in readiness at the creek near our dwelling. The one designed for my conveyance was comfortable, according to Birman notions of accommodation. It consisted of three small compartments, partitioned by fine mats, neatly fastened to slips of bamboo cane. The inner room was lined with Indian chintz. The roof, however, was so low as not to admit of a person standing upright; an inconvenience scarcely to be endured by an European, but not at all regarded by Asiatics. It was rowed by twelve Birman watermen, who used short oars made in the English form, and who seemed to understand their business. A large heavy boat was provided for the soldiers and our domestics, and a small cutter attended as a kitchen. The boat destined for Dr Buchanan

did not arrive until it was dark, and being a very indifferent one, we imagined it was kept out of sight for that reason.

The mouth of the Syriam or Pegue river, where it joins with that of Rangoon, is about three miles below the town; we therefore waited till the ebb tide was nearly spent, in order to drop down, and take the first of the flood to ascend the river of Pegue. At eight o'clock at night we embarked, accompanied by two war-boats, in one of which was the Nakhaan of Rangoon, and in the other an inferior officer. A black Portuguese in the service of the provincial government, who spoke the language of Hindostan, came as official interpreter. We had likewise another Portuguese, named Pauntchoo, who engaged in my service at the Andaman island, whither he had come from Bassien, as a trader in tobacco and small articles for the supply of the colony. This man was a valuable acquisition to me during the mission. He spoke the Birman language fluently, and that of Hindostan intelligibly. The latter was the medium I commonly used in my conversations with Birmans, and I was seldom at a loss to find some person that understood it. On arriving at the mouth of the Pegue river, we brought to, and waited an hour for the turn of tide, which, during the springs, runs with considerable violence. On the first of the flood, we weighed, and used our oars. Neap tides prevailing, the boats made but slow progress, about four miles an hour, continuing at that rate for seven hours, when we again stopped, and fastened our boats to the bank.

Early in the morning, Dr Buchanan and myself walked out with our guns, accompanied by half a

dozen attendants. The country round, as far as our view could reach, displayed a level plain, with clumps of trees at distant intervals. A thick reedy grass had grown in some places very high; in others, where it had been burnt, there appeared good pasturage for cattle. We saw the embanked divisions of a few rice plantations, and discovered the vestiges of former culture and population; but during a walk of two hours, the eye was not gratified with the sight of a house, or an inhabitant. Desolated by the contentions of the Birmans and Peguers, the country had not yet recovered from the ravages of war. In our walk we observed many tracks of wild elephants, the spots where hogs had rooted, and deer lain, and found the remains of two antelopes that had recently been killed and half devoured by tigers. The Doctor and myself fired at a deer without success. The banks on each side the river are low, and the land seems adapted to produce excellent crops; but it is now quite deserted, and become the undisputed domain of the wild beasts of the forest.

CHAPTER IX.

ARRIVE AT PEGUE—POLITE RECEPTION—INVITED TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE ANNUAL FESTIVAL—PROCESSION DESCRIBED—SPORTS IN HONOUR OF THE DAY—PUGILISTIC EXERCISES—BIRMANS EXPERT AT WRESTLING—FORMAL INTRODUCTION TO THE MAYWOON, OR VICEROY—COMPANIES FROM THE DIFFERENT DISTRICTS OF THE PROVINCE PASS IN REVIEW—GRAND DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS—ORDERLY AND SOBER DEMEANOUR OF THE POPULACE—CURIOSITY OF THE BIRMANS—ATTENTION OF THE VICEROY TO OUR ACCOMMODATION—INVITED TO A DRAMATIC REPRESENTATION—SIAMESE ACTORS—AN EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMER—DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAY—BIRMANS CLOSE THE YEAR WITH A PURIFICATORY CEREMONIAL, IN WHICH THE ENGLISH GENTLEMEN BEAR A PART.

At noon we got under way, and soon passed a village on the right, consisting of about twenty houses. The river gradually diminished in breadth, and at this place was not more than forty yards wide, the banks covered with coppice and long reeds. After passing another and larger village, where there was a chokey or watch-house, we

proceeded through a cultivated country, and numerous villages appeared on each side. At seven in the evening we were in sight of Pegue, and judged the distance by water from Rangoon to be about ninety miles, most part of the way in a northward direction; but the windings of the river are so great, that the road in a straight line must be much less. When we approached the landing-place, Mr Wood came down to meet us, and the favourable account he gave of his reception, added not a little to the satisfaction of having finished our journey; we also found Baba-Sheen on the bank waiting our arrival. This personage conducted us with great civility to our habitation, which we were pleased at finding far superior to that we had left. It was situated on a plain, a few hundred yards without the principal gate of the present town, but within the fortified lines of the ancient city. Like Birman houses in general, it was raised between three and four feet from the ground, composed wholly of bamboos and mats, and indifferently thatched. This is a defect that extends universally to their own dwellings, and affords matter of surprise, in a country where the coarse grass used for thatching is so plentiful. We had each a small apartment as a bed-chamber, with carpets spread over the mats, and a larger room to dine in and to receive visitors. Huts were also erected for our attendants; and a bamboo palisade, enclosing a court sufficiently spacious, surrounded the whole. On the whole, we had reason to be satisfied with our dwelling; it was commodious, according to the ideas of the people themselves, and we had no right to com-

plain of that which was well intended. Shortly after our arrival, two officers of government waited on me, with compliments of congratulation from the Maywoon: they staid but a short time, perceiving that we were busy in arranging conveniences for the night.

Our servants were occupied during the greater part of the next day in bringing up our baggage from the boats to the house, a distance of nearly half a mile. In the afternoon, an officer called Che-Key, second in rank to the Maywoon, and the Sere-dogee, or secretary of the provincial government, accompanied by Baba-Sheen, paid us a visit to tea. They informed me, that the Maywoon, or viceroy, who had been much engaged in directing the preparations for the ensuing festival, hoped that we would wave ceremony, and give him our company on the following morning at the great temple of Shoemadoo, to view the amusements of the first day—an invitation that I gladly accepted, from motives of curiosity as well as of respect.

At eight o'clock in the morning Baba-Sheen arrived, in order to conduct us to the temple; and brought with him three small horses, equipped with saddles and bridles, resembling those used by the higher ranks of the inhabitants of Hindostan. After breakfast, Mr Wood, Doctor Buchanan, and myself, mounted, and attended by Baba-Sheen, and an Ackedoo, an officer belonging to the Maywoon's household, also on horseback, set out to view the ceremony. We entered the new town by the nearest gate, and proceeded upwards of a quarter of a mile through the principal street, till we came to where it was crossed at right angles

by another, which led from the Maywoon's residence to the temple. Here our progress was stopped by a great concourse of people; and we perceived on each side of the way troops marching by single files, in slow time, towards the temple. By the advice of Baba-Sheen, we occupied a convenient spot to view the procession. The troops that we saw were the Maywoon's guard; five or six hundred men passed us in this manner, wretchedly armed and equipped. Many had muskets that appeared in a very unserviceable state, with accoutrements not in a more respectable condition. Some were provided with spears, others with sabres; whilst their dress was as motley as their weapons. Several were naked to the middle, having only a kummerband, or waistcloth, rolled round their waist, and passed between their legs. Some were dressed in old velvet or cloth coats, which they put on regardless of size or fashion, although it scarcely covered their nakedness, or trailed on the ground; it was finery, and finery in any shape was welcome. Some wore Dutch broad-brimmed hats, bound with gold lace; others the crowns of hats, without any brim at all. The officers of this martial band, who were for the most part Christian descendants of Portuguese ancestors, exhibited a very grotesque appearance. The first personages of rank that passed by, were three children of the Maywoon, borne astride upon men's shoulders; the eldest, a boy about eight years of age; the youngest, a girl not more than five. The latter only was legitimate, being the first born of his present wife; the two elder were the offspring of concubines. The Maywoon followed at a short distance, mounted on the neck of a very

fine elephant, which he guided himself. His dress was handsome and becoming; he had on a dark velvet robe, with long sleeves, trimmed with broad gold lace, and on his head he wore a conical cap, of the same material, richly embroidered. A number of parade elephants, in tawdry housings, brought up the rear. As we had not been formally introduced, he passed by without honouring us with any notice. Proceeding to the foot of the steps that lead to the pagoda, his elephant knelt down to suffer him to alight. Whilst he was in the performance of this act, the parade elephants knelt also, and the crowd that followed squatted on their heels. Having ascended the flight of steps, he put off his shoes, and walked once round the temple without his umbrella, which was laid aside out of reverence to the sanctity of the place. When he had finished this ceremony, he proceeded to the scene of amusement—a sort of theatre, erected at an angle of the area of the temple. Two saloons, or open halls, separate from the great building, formed two sides of the theatre, which was about fifty feet square, covered by an awning of grass, spread on a flat roof of slender canes, supported by bamboo poles. Beneath the projecting verge of the roof of one of the saloons, there was an elevated seat, with a handsome canopy of cloth, for the accommodation of the Maywoon and his three children; and on a bare bench beneath him sat the principal officers of his court. On the left side of the theatre, a similar canopy and chair were erected for the Maywoon of Martaban, who happened at this time to be passing by to take possession of his government. Opposite to him, under the roof of the other sa-

loon, seats were provided for the English gentlemen, covered with fine carpeting, but without any canopy. The diversions of this day consisted entirely of boxing and wrestling. In order to prevent injury to the champions, the ground had been prepared and made soft with moistened sand. At the latter exercise they seemed to be very expert. A short stout man was particularly distinguished for his superior skill and strength. We were told that, in former contests, he had killed two of his antagonists. The first that encountered him on the present occasion, though much superior in size, was, after a short struggle, pitched on his head; and, as the bystanders said, severely hurt. Many others displayed great activity and address; but in the art of boxing they seemed very deficient, notwithstanding they used fists, knees, and elbows. The battles were of short duration. Blood drawn on either side terminated the contest; and even without it, the Maywoon would not suffer them to contend long. At the end of an engagement both combatants approached the Maywoon's throne, and prostrated themselves before him, with their foreheads to the ground; whilst an attendant spread on the shoulders of each two pieces of cotton cloth, as the reward of their exertions, which they carried away in a crouching position, until they mingled with the crowd. The places of those who retired were immediately filled by fresh pugilists. This amusement lasted for three hours, until we became quite weary of it. Tea and sweetmeats, in great profusion, were afterwards served to us, in the name of the Maywoon. We departed without ceremony, and got home about four o'clock,

extremely oppressed by the intense heat of the weather.

In the morning an early message came from the Maywoon, intimating that he hoped to see us that day at the government-house. Baba-Sheen also made a tender of his services to introduce us to the Praw, or lord; who, being ready at the hour appointed, we set out on horseback to pay our visit of ceremony, preceded by the soldiers of the guard, and our personal attendants. Six Birmans also walked in front, bearing the articles intended as a present; which consisted of silks, satins, velvets, gold, flowered and plain muslins, some broad cloth, and a handsome silver-mounted fowling-piece. In this order we marched through the town, the objects of universal curiosity, till we reached the gate of an inclosure surrounding the Maywoon's dwelling. It was made of boards nailed to posts twelve or thirteen feet high, and comprehended a spacious square, in the centre of which stood the governor's residence. There were likewise some smaller houses irregularly disposed; appropriated, as we understood, to the several members of the Maywoon's family. We pulled off our shoes at the bottom of the stairs, and were ushered into a saloon, from whence, turning to the right, we ascended three steps into a hall, where a number of persons, ranged on each side, were sitting with their legs inverted, waiting the entrance of the Maywoon. Instructed by Baba-Sheen, we took our seats on small carpets spread in the middle of the room, in front of a narrow gallery elevated about two feet from the floor and railed in, with the presents placed before us on trays. In a few minutes the Maywoon entered by a door at

one end of the gallery. We made no obeisance, as none was desired; but his attendants crouched to the ground. He sat down, and silence was kept for some time, which I first interrupted by telling him, through Baba-Sheen, that the Governor-general of India, having received his friendly letter, and being well assured of the amicable disposition of the Birman government towards the English nation, had charged me with the delivery of letters and presents to his majesty at Ava; and had likewise requested his acceptance of a few articles which I had brought with me. I then rose and presented the Governor-general's letter. He laid it on the tray before him, talked of indifferent matters, and was extremely polite in his expressions and manner; but carefully avoided all discourse that had the least relation to business, or the objects of the embassy. After half an hour's conversation, chiefly on uninteresting topics, he invited us to a grand display of fireworks, which was to take place on the following day, and soon after withdrew unceremoniously. Tea and sweat-meats were then served up. Having tasted of what was set before us, we were conducted by Baba-Sheen to the outer balcony, to view the different companies pass by that intended to exhibit fireworks on the following day.

It is the custom, on this occasion, for the several Mious, or districts, whose situation is not too remote, to select and send a number of men and women from their community to represent them at the general festival. These companies vie with each other in the magnificence of their fireworks; and, on the eve of celebration, pass the government-house in review before the Maywoon and his

family—each company distinct. A small waggon, drawn by four buffaloes, profusely decorated with peacocks' feathers and the tails of Thibet cows, led the procession, on which were laid the fireworks of that particular company. Next advanced the men belonging to it, dancing and shouting. The females, in a separate troop, came last, singing in full chorus, and clapping their hands in accurately measured time. They, for the most part, appeared to be girls from sixteen to twenty years of age—comely, and well made; but their features were without the delicacy of the damsels of Hindostan, or the bloom of the soft Circassian beauties. In every company of young women, there were a few aged matrons—probably as a check on the vivacity of youth. The seniors, however, seemed to join in the festivity with juvenile sprightliness. Refreshments were again served up to us, and we returned home about two o'clock.

At eight in the morning great crowds had assembled on the plain without the stockade of the present town, but within the walls of ancient Pegue. Three temporary sheds were erected on the middle of the green, apart from each other, one for the reception of the Maywoon and his family, another for the Martaban governor, and a third for our accommodation. Common spectators, to the number of many thousands, were scattered in groups over the plain. Each division or company exhibited in turn its own fireworks. The display of rockets was strikingly grand, but nothing else merited attention. The cylinders of the rockets were trunks of trees hollowed, many of them seven or eight feet long, and from two to three feet in circumference. These were bound by strong liga-

tures to thick bamboos, eighteen or twenty feet in length. They rose to a great height, and in descending, emitted various appearances of fire that were very beautiful. The time appointed for the amusement considerably diminished the effect; but it was chosen from a humane apprehension of injury to the people, by the fall of extinguished rockets, which must have rendered the diversion, during the night, extremely dangerous. Notwithstanding this precaution, a man was unfortunate enough to be in the way of one that killed him on the spot. Each company, after contributing its share towards the general entertainment, marched past the Maywoon, to the sound of musical instruments; after which, they proceeded to our shed with songs and dances, 'the pipe and the tabor, manifesting every lively demonstration of joy.

It was a spectacle not less pleasing than novel to an European, to witness such a concourse of people of all classes, brought together for the purposes of hilarity and sport, without their committing one act of intemperance, or being disgraced by a single instance of intoxication. What scenes of riot and debauchery would not a similar festival, in the vicinity of any capital town of Great Britain, inevitably produce! The reflection is humiliating to an Englishman, however proud he may feel of the national character.

During the four following days, we enjoyed a respite from public shows and ceremonials, and had leisure for observation, though our hall, in a morning, was generally crowded, as every person of distinction in Pegue paid me the compliment of a visit, except the Maywoon, who, within the

precincts of his own government, where he represents the king, never returns a visit. Numbers, both of men and women, prompted by harmless curiosity, surrounded the paling of the inclosure from morning till night. Those of a better class usually came in, some previously asking permission, but many entered without it. Perfectly free from restraint among themselves, the Birmans scruple not to go into your house without ceremony, although you are an utter stranger. To do them justice, however, they are not at all displeased at your taking the same freedom with them. This intrusion is confined wholly to your public room. They do not attempt to open a door; and where a curtain dropped denotes privacy, they never offer to violate the barrier. On entering the room, they immediately descend into the posture of respect. Of all our customs, none seemed to surprise them more than the preparations for dining; the variety of utensils, and our manner of sitting at a table, excited their wonder. They never took any greater liberty than merely to come into the room, and sit down on the floor. They meddled with nothing, and asked for nothing; and when desired to go away, always obeyed with cheerfulness. Had untold gold been placed before them, I am confident not a piece would have been purloined. Among the men of rank that visited us, an officer called Seree-dogee favoured us with his company more frequently than the rest. He held, by commission from the king, the place of chief provincial secretary, and junior judge of the criminal court. This gentleman often partook of our dinner, and seemed to relish our fare, but could not be prevailed on to taste wine or strong

liquors. He was much pleased, however, with the English mode of making tea, of which he drank copiously; indeed it is a beverage highly palatable to all ranks of Birmans.

Although, from the established forms of diplomatic etiquette, we had little personal intercourse with the Maywoon, yet he was not deficient in attention. He sent large supplies of rice, oil, gee, preserved tamarinds, and spices, for our Indian attendants. Presents also of fruit and flowers were daily brought to me in his name. As their religion forbids the slaughter of any but wild animals, for the purposes of food, he did not offer any thing for the use of the table; but our servants had liberty to purchase whatever they wanted. Fowls, kid and venison, constituted our principal dishes; the two first we procured in abundance, and of a good quality. The venison was meagre, but well tasted, and made excellent soup. It was chiefly the wild antelope, with which the country abounds. Having among my people two bakers, and a person who understood making butter, we were seldom without these essential articles, and of a tolerable quality. Whatever we had occasion to kill, was slain in the night, to avoid offending the prejudices of the people, who, so far from seeking cause of offence, were inclined to make every liberal allowance for the usage of foreigners. The Maywoon politely ordered a pair of horses of the Pegue breed, small, but handsome and spirited, to be selected, and sent to us, from his own stud, accompanied by two grooms, one to attend each horse. A temporary stable was erected for them within the paling of our court, where they continued whilst we remained at Pegue, and af-

forded us the means of exercise and pleasing recreation. Being now commodiously settled, I invited Captain Thomas from Rangoon, to spend a few days with us. He accepted my invitation, and came up in a boat, provided by the intendant of the port, having previously arranged the concerns of his ship, and the mode of supplying the crew during his absence.

The solar year of the Birmans was now drawing to a close, and the three last days are usually spent by them in merriment and feasting. We were invited by the Maywoon to be present on the evening of the 10th of April, at the exhibition of a dramatic representation.

At a little before eight o'clock, the hour when the play was to commence, we proceeded to the house of the Maywoon, accompanied by Baba-Sheen, who, on all occasions, acted as master of the ceremonies. The theatre was the open court, splendidly illuminated by lamps and torches. The Maywoon and his lady sat in a projecting balcony of his house; we occupied seats below him, raised about two feet from the ground, and covered with carpets. A crowd of spectators were seated in a circle round the stage. The performance began immediately on our arrival, and far excelled any Indian drama that I had ever seen. The dialogue was spirited without rant, and the action animated without being extravagant. The dresses of the principal performers were showy and becoming. I was told that the best actors were natives of Siam, a nation which, though unable to contend with the Birmans and Peguers in war, have cultivated with more success the refined arts of peace. By way of interlude between the acts, a clownish

buffoon entertained the audience with a recital of different passages; and by a grimace, and frequent alterations of tone and countenance, extorted loud peals of laughter from the spectators. The Birmans seem to delight in mimickry, and are very expert in the practice, possessing uncommon versatility of countenance. An eminent practitioner of this art amused us with a specimen of his skill, at our own house, and, to our no small astonishment, exhibited a masterly display of the passions, in pantomimic looks and gestures. The transitions he made from pain to pleasure, from joy to despair, from rage to mildness, from laughter to tears; his expression of terror, and, above all, his look of idiotism, were performances of first-rate merit in their line; and we agreed in opinion, that had his fates decreed him to have been a native of Great Britain, his genius would have rivalled that of any modern comedian of the English stage.

The plot of the drama performed this evening, I understood, was taken from the sacred text of the Ramayan of Balmiec,* a work of high authority amongst the Hindoos. It represented the battles of the holy Ram and the impious Rahwaan, chief of the Rakuss, or demons, to revenge the rape of Seeta, the wife of Ram, who was forcibly carried away by Rahwaan, and bound under the spells of enchantment. Vicissitudes of fortune took place during the performance, that seemed highly interesting to the audience. Ram was at length wounded by a poisoned arrow; the sages

* Called by Sir William Jones, Valmiec.

skilled in medicine consulted on his cure. They discovered, that on the mountain Indragurry, grew a certain tree that produced gum, which was a sovereign antidote against the deleterious effects of poison; but the distance was so great, that none could be found to undertake the journey. At length Honymaan, * leader of the army of apes, offered to go in quest of it. When he arrived at the place, being uncertain which was the tree, he took up half the mountain, and transported it with ease. Thus was the cure of Ram happily effected, the enchantment was broken, and the piece ended with a dance, and songs of triumph.

On the 12th of April, the last day of the Birman year, we were invited by the Maywoon to bear a part ourselves in a sport that is universally practised throughout the Birman dominions, on the concluding day of their annual cycle. To wash away the impurities of the past, and commence the new year free from stain, women on this day are accustomed to throw water on every man they meet, which the men have the privilege of retorting. This license gives rise to a great deal of harmless merriment, particularly amongst the young women, who, armed with large syringes and flaggons, endeavour to wet every man that goes along the street, and, in their turn, receive a wetting with perfect good humour. Nor is the smallest indecency ever manifested in this or in any other of their sports. Dirty water is never cast. A

* Honymaan is worshipped by the Hindoos under the form of an ape, and is one of the most frequent objects of their adoration. Almost every Hindoo pagoda has this figure delineated in some part of it. Honymaan is the term used by the Hindoos to denote a large ape.

man is not allowed to lay hold of a woman, but may fling as much water over her as he pleases, provided she has been the aggressor; but if a woman warns a man that she does not mean to join in the diversion, it is considered as an avowal of pregnancy, and she passes without molestation.

About an hour before sunset we went to the Maywoon's, and found that his lady had provided plentifully to give us a wet reception. In the hall were placed three large china jars, full of water, with bowls and ladles to fling it. Each of us, on entering, had a bottle of rose-water presented to him, a little of which we in turn poured into the palm of the Maywoon's hand, who sprinkled it over his own vest of fine flowered muslin. The lady then made her appearance at the door, and gave us to understand that she did not mean to join in the sport herself, but made her eldest daughter, a pretty child, in the nurse's arms, pour from a golden cup some rose-water mixed with sandal-wood, first over her father, and then over each of the English gentlemen. This was a signal for the sport to begin. We were prepared, being dressed in linen waistcoats. From ten to twenty women, young and middle aged, rushed into the hall from the inner apartments, who surrounded and deluged without mercy four men ill able to maintain so unequal a contest. The Maywoon was soon driven from the field; but Mr Wood having got possession of one of the jars, we were enabled to preserve our ground till the water was exhausted. It seemed to afford them great diversion, especially if we appeared at all distressed by the quantity of water flung in our faces. All parties being tired, and completely drenched,

we went home to change our clothes, and in the way met many damsels who would willingly have renewed the sport. They, however, were afraid to begin without receiving encouragement from us, not knowing how it might be taken by strangers; but they assailed Baba-Sheen and his Birman attendants with little ceremony. No inconvenient consequences were to be apprehended from the wetting. The weather was favourable, and we ran no risk of taking cold. Having put on dry clothes, we returned to the Maywoon's, and were entertained with a dance and puppet-show that lasted till eleven.

CHAPTER X.

PUBLIC REJOICINGS CEASE—SITE OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF PEGUE—FORTIFICATIONS—ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN TO SETTLERS—DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW TOWN—PUBLIC BUILDINGS—DREAD OF FIRE—PRECAUTIONS USED AGAINST IT—AN ACCOUNT OF THE TEMPLE OF SHOEMADOO—VISIT THE SIREDAW, THE SUPERIOR RHAHAAN, OR HIGH PRIEST OF THE COUNTRY—DESOLATED STATE OF THE ENVIRONS OF PEGUE—MONASTIC RETREATS OF THE RHAHAANS — MANUFACTURES AT PEGUE—OFFICERS OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT—ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE—MONSOON THREATENS—PREPARE TO DEPART—TAKE LEAVE OF THE VICEROY.

SPORTS and festivities ceased with the departed year, a circumstance that gave us great pleasure, as from attending them we were frequently exposed to the influence of a burning sun, which at this season is most powerful. But though the heat from noon till five in the evening was intense, yet the nights were cool, and the mornings pleasant and refreshing. I generally took advantage

of two temperate hours, from the dawn of day till the sun became inconvenient, to walk or ride through the city and its environs; and in all my excursions I never once experienced insult or molestation. Curiosity and astonishment were often expressed, but unaccompanied by personal incivility, or by the slightest indication of contempt.

The fate that befel this once flourishing city has already been recounted in the preceding pages. The extent of ancient Pegue may still be accurately traced by the ruins of the ditch and wall that surrounded it. From these it appears to have been a quadrangle, each side measuring nearly a mile and a half. In several places the ditch is choked up by rubbish that has been cast into it, and the falling of its own banks; sufficient, however, still remains to show that it was once no contemptible defence. The breadth I judged to be about sixty yards, and the depth ten or twelve feet. In some parts of it there is water, but in no considerable quantity. I was informed, that when the ditch was in repair, the water seldom, in the hottest season, sunk below the depth of four feet. An injudicious faussebray, thirty feet wide, did not add to the security of the fortress.

The fragments of the wall likewise evince that this was a work of magnitude and labour. It is not easy to ascertain precisely what was its height, but we conjectured it at least thirty feet, and in breadth, at the base, not less than forty. It is composed of brick, badly cemented with clay mortar. Small equidistant bastions, about 300 yards asunder, are still discoverable; and there had been a parapet of masonry; but the whole is in a state so ruinous,

and so covered with weeds and briars, as to leave very imperfect vestiges of its former strength.

In the centre of each face of the fort there is a gateway about thirty feet wide; and these gateways were the principal entrances. The passage across the ditch is over a causeway raised on a mound of earth, that serves as a bridge and was formerly defended by a retrenchment, of which there are now no traces.

It is impossible to conceive a more striking picture of fallen grandeur, and the desolating hand of war, than the inside of these walls displays. Alompra, when he got possession of the city in the year 1757, razed every dwelling to the ground, and dispersed or led into captivity all the inhabitants. The temples or praws, which are very numerous, were the only buildings that escaped the fury of the conqueror; and of these the great pyramid of Shoemadoo has alone been reverenced and kept in repair.

The present king of the Birmans, whose government has been less disturbed than that of any of his predecessors, early in his reign turned his thoughts to the population and improvement, as well as the extension, of his dominions, and seemed desirous to conciliate his subjects by mildness, rather than to govern them by terror. He has abrogated some severe penal laws imposed by his predecessors upon the Taliens, or native Peguers. Justice is now impartially distributed; and the only distinction at present between a Birman and a Talien consists in the exclusion of the latter from places of public trust and power.

No act of the Birman government is more likely to reconcile the Peguers to the Birman yoke,

than the restoration of their ancient place of abode, and the preservation and embellishment of the temple of Shöemadoo. The king, sensible of this, as well as of the advantages that must arise to the state, from the increase of culture and population, five years ago issued orders to rebuild Pegue, encouraged settlers by grants of ground, and invited the scattered families of former inhabitants to return and repeople their deserted city.

His Birman majesty, more effectually to accomplish this end, on the death of the late Maywoon, which happened about five years ago, directed his successor, the present governor, to quit Rangoon, and make Pegue his future residence, and the seat of provincial government of the thirty-two districts of Henzawuddy.*

These judicious measures have so far succeeded, that a new town has been built within the site of the ancient city. But Rangoon possesses so many advantages over Pegue in a commercial point of view, that persons of property who are engaged in business will not easily be prevailed upon to leave one of the finest sea-ports in the world, to encounter the difficulties of a new settlement, where commerce, if any can subsist, must be very confined, from the want of a commodious navigation. The present inhabitants, who have been induced to return, consist chiefly of Rhahaans, or priests, followers of the provincial court, and poor Talien families, who were glad to regain a settlement in their once magnificent metropolis. The number altogether perhaps does not exceed six or seven thousand. Those who dwelt in Pegue during its

* The Shanscrit name given to the province of Pegue by the Birmans.

former days of splendor are now nearly extinct, and their descendants and relatives scattered over the provinces of Tongho, Martaban, and Talowmeou. Many also live under the protection of the Siamese. There is little doubt, however, that the respect paid to their favourite temple of worship, and the security and encouragement held out to those who venture to return, will, in time, accomplish the wise and humane intentions of the Birman monarch.

Pegue, in its renovated and contracted state, seems to be built on the plan of the former city, and occupies about one half of its area. It is fenced round by a stockade from ten to twelve feet high; on the north and east sides, it borders on the old wall. The plane of the town is not yet filled with houses, but a number of new ones are building. There is one main street running east and west, crossed at right angles by two smaller streets not yet finished. At each extremity of the principal street, there is a gate in the stockade, which is shut early in the evening; and after that time entrance during the night is confined to a wicket. Each of these gates is defended by a wretched piece of ordnance, and a few musketeers, who never post sentinels, and are usually asleep in an adjoining shed. There are two inferior gates on the north and south side of the stockade.

The streets of Pegue are spacious, as are those of all the Birman towns that I have seen. The new town is well paved with brick, which the ruins of the old plentifully supply; and on each side of the way there is a drain to carry off the water. The houses of the meanest peasants of Pegue, and

throughout the Birman empire, possess manifest advantage over Indian dwellings, by being raised from the ground either on wooden posts or bamboos, according to the size of the building. The kioums or monasteries of the Rhahaans, and the habitations of the higher ranks, are usually elevated six or eight, those of the lower classes from two to four feet.

There are no brick buildings either in Pegue or Rangoon, except such as belong to the king, or are dedicated to their divinity Gaudma ; his majesty having prohibited the use of brick or stone in private buildings, from the apprehension, as I was informed, that if people got leave to build brick houses, they might erect brick fortifications, dangerous to the security of the state. The houses, therefore, are all made of mats, or sheathing boards, supported on bamboos or posts ; but from their being composed of such combustible materials, the inhabitants are under continual dread of fire, against which they take every precaution. The roofs are lightly covered, and at each door stands a long bamboo, with an iron hook at the end, to pull down the thatch. There is also another pole, with a grating of iron at the extremity, about three feet square, to suppress flame by pressure. Almost every house has earthen pots, filled with water, on the roof ; and a particular class of people,* whose

* These people are called Pagwaat ; they are slaves of government ; men who have been found guilty of theft, and, through mercy, had their lives spared. They are distinguished by a black circle on each cheek, caused by gunpowder and punctuation ; as well as by having on their breast, in Birman characters, the word *Thief*, and the name of the article stolen, as, on one that I asked to be explained to me, Putchoo Khoo, *cloth thief*. These men patrole

business it is to prevent and extinguish fires, perambulate the streets during the night.

The Maywoon's habitation, though not at all a magnificent mansion for the representative of royalty, is, notwithstanding, a building of much respectability, compared to the other houses of Pegue. From an outside view, we judged it to be roomy, and to contain several apartments, exclusive of that in which he gives audience. It possesses, however, but few ornaments. Gilding is forbidden to all subjects of the Birman empire. Liberty even to lacker and paint the pillars of their houses, is granted to very few. The naked wood gave an unfinished appearance to the dwelling of the Maywoon, which, in other respects, seemed well adapted for the accommodation of a Birman family.

The object in Pegue that most attracts and most merits notice, is the noble edifice of Shoemadoo,*

the streets at night, to put out all fires and lights after a certain hour. They act as constables, and are the public executioners.

* Shoe or Shuœ, in the Birman tongue, signifies golden; and there can be no doubt that Madoo is a corruption of Mahadeva, or Deo. I could not learn from the Birmans the origin or etymology of the term; it was explained to me as signifying a promontory that overlooked land and water. Praw imports lord, and is always annexed to the name of a sacred building. It is likewise a sovereign and a sacerdotal title, and is frequently used by an inferior when addressing his superior. The analogy between the Birmans and ancient Egyptians in the application of this term, as also in many other particulars, is highly deserving of notice.

Phra was the proper name under which the Egyptians first adored the Sun, before it received the allegorical appellation of Osiris, or Author of Time; they likewise conferred the same title on their kings and on their priests.

In the first book of Moses, chap. xli. Pharaoh gives

or the Golden Supreme. This extraordinary pile of buildings is erected on a double terrace, one raised upon another. The lower and greater terrace is about ten feet above the natural level of the ground, forming an exact parallelogram. The upper and lesser terrace is similar in shape, and rises about twenty feet above the lower terrace, or thirty above the level of the country. I judged a side of the lower terrace to be 1391 feet; of the upper, 684. The walls that sustained the sides of the terrace, both upper and lower, are in a ruinous state; they were formerly covered with plaster, wrought into various figures. The area of the lower is strewed with the fragments of small decayed buildings; but the upper is free from filth, and is in tolerably good order. There is reason to conclude that this building and the fortress are coeval, as the earth of which the terraces are composed appears to have been taken from the ditch—there being no other excavation in the city, or in its neighbourhood, that could have afforded a tenth part of the quantity.

The terraces are ascended by flights of stone steps, which are now broken and neglected. On each side are dwellings of the Rhahaans, raised on timbers four or five feet from the ground. These houses consist only of a large hall. The wooden pillars that support them are turned with neatness;

'Joseph to wife, the daughter of Potiphera, or the priest of On.' In the book of Jeremiah, a king of Egypt is styled Pharaoh *Ophra*; and it is not a very improbable conjecture that the title of Pharaoh, given to the successive kings of Egypt, is a corruption of the word Phraw or Praw, in its original sense signifying the sun, and applied to the sovereign and priesthood, as the representatives on earth of that splendid luminary.

the roofs are covered with tiles, and the sides are made of boards; and there are a number of bare benches in every house, on which the Rhahaans sleep; but we saw no other furniture.

Shoemadoo is a pyramidical building, composed of brick and mortar, without excavation or aperture of any sort; octagonal at the base, and spiral at top. Each side of the base measures 162 feet. This immense breadth diminishes abruptly; and a similar building has, not unaptly, been compared in shape to a large speaking trumpet.*

Six feet from the ground there is a wide projection that surrounds the base; on the plane of which are fifty-seven small spires of equal size, and equidistant. One of them measured twenty-seven feet in height, and forty in circumference at the bottom. On a higher ledge there is another row, consisting of fifty-three spires of similar shape and measurement.

A great variety of mouldings encircle the building; and ornaments somewhat resembling the fleur-de-lys surround the lower part of the spire. Circular mouldings likewise gird it to a considerable height, above which there are ornaments in stucco not unlike the leaves of a Corinthian capital; and the whole is crowned by a *Tee,* or umbrella of open iron-work, from which rises a rod with a gilded pennant.

The tee, or umbrella, is to be seen on every sacred building that is of a spiral form. The raising and consecration of this last and indispensable appendage, is an act of high religious solemnity, and a season of festivity and relaxation. The present

* See Mr Hunter's Account of Pegue.

king bestowed the tee that covers Shoemadoo. It was made at the capital; and many of the principal nobility came down from Ummerapoora to be present at the ceremony of its elevation.

The circumference of the tee is fifty-six feet. It rests on an iron axis fixed in the building, and is farther secured by large chains strongly rivetted to the spire. Round the lower rim of the tee are appended a number of bells, which, agitated by the wind, make a continual jingling.

The tee is gilt, and it is said to be the intention of the king to gild the whole of the spire. All the lesser pagodas are ornamented with proportionable umbrellas of similar workmanship, which are likewise encircled by small bells.

The extreme height of the edifice, from the level of the country, is 361 feet, and above the interior terrace, 331 feet.

On the south-east angle of the upper terrace there are two handsome saloons, or kioums, lately erected—the roofs composed of different stages, supported by pillars. We judged the length of each to be about sixty feet, and the breadth thirty. The ceiling of one is already embellished with gold leaf, and the pillars are lackered; the decoration of the other is not yet completed. They are made entirely of wood: the carving on the outside is laborious and minute. We saw several unfinished figures of animals and men in grotesque attitudes, which were designed as ornaments for different parts of the building. Some images of Gaudma, the supreme object of Birman adoration, lay scattered around.

At each angle of the interior and higher terrace there is a temple sixty-seven feet high, resembling,

in miniature, the great temple. In front of that, in the south-west corner, are four gigantic representations, in masonry, of Palloo, or the evil genius, half beast half human, seated on their hams, each with a large club on the right shoulder. The Pundit who accompanied me, said that they resembled the Rakuss of the Hindoos. These are guardians of the temple.

Nearly in the centre of the east face of the area are two human figures in stucco, beneath a gilded umbrella. One, standing, represents a man with a book before him, and a pen in his hand; he is called Thasiamee, the recorder of mortal merits and mortal misdeeds. The other, a female figure kneeling, is Mahasumdera, the protectress of the universe, so long as the universe is doomed to last; but, when the time of general dissolution arrives, by her hand the world is to be overwhelmed and everlastingly destroyed.

A small brick building near the north-east angle contains an upright marble slab, four feet high, and three feet wide There is a long legible inscription on it. I was told it was an account of the donations of pilgrims of only a recent date.

Along the whole extent of the north face of the upper terrace there is a wooden shed for the convenience of devotees who come from a distant part of the country. On the north side of the temple are three large bells, of good workmanship, suspended nigh the ground, between pillars. Several deers horns lie strewed around. Those who come to pay their devotions first take up one of the horns, and strike the bell three times, giving an alternate stroke to the ground. This act, I was told, is to announce to the spirit of Gaudma the

approach of a suppliant. There are several low benches near the foot of the temple, on which the person who comes to pray places his offering—commonly consisting of boiled rice, a plate of sweetmeats, or cocoa-nut fried in oil. When it is given, the devotee cares not what becomes of it; the crows and wild dogs often devour it in presence of the donor, who never attempts to disturb the animals. I saw several plates of victuals disposed of in this manner, and understood it to be the case with all that was brought.

There are many small temples on the areas of both terraces, which are neglected, and suffered to fall into decay. Numberless images of Gaudma lie indiscriminately scattered. A pious Birman who purchases an idol, first procures the ceremony of consecration to be performed by the Rhahaans; he then takes his purchase to whatever sacred building is most convenient, and there places it within the shelter of a kioum, or on the open ground before the temple; nor does he ever again seem to have any anxiety about its preservation, but leaves the divinity to shift for itself. Some of those idols are made of marble that is found in the neighbourhood of the capital of the Birman dominions, and admits of a very fine polish; many are formed of wood, and gilded, and a few are of silver; the latter, however, are not usually exposed and neglected like the others. Silver and gold is rarely used, except in the composition of household gods.

On both the terraces are a number of white cylindrical flags, raised on bamboo poles. These flags are peculiar to the Rhahaans, and are considered as emblematic of purity, and of their sacred func-

tion. On the top of the staff there is a henza, or goose, the symbol both of the Birman and Pegue nations.

From the upper projection that surrounds the base of Shoemadoo, the prospect of the circumjacent country is extensive and picturesque; but it is a prospect of nature in her rudest state. There are few inhabitants, and scarcely any cultivation. The hills of Martaban rise to the eastward, and the Sitang river, winding along the plains, gives an interrupted view of its waters. To the north-west, about forty miles, are the Galladzet hills, whence the Pegue river takes its rise; hills remarkable only for the noisome effects of their atmosphere. In every other direction, the eye looks over a boundless plain, checquered by a wild intermixture of wood and water.

Not being able to procure any satisfactory information respecting the antiquity of Shoemadoo, I paid a visit to the Siredaw, or superior Rhahaan of the country, whose abode was situated in a shady grove of tamarind trees, about five miles south-east of the city, where every object seemed to correspond with the years and dignity of the possessor. The trees were lofty; a bamboo railing protected his dwelling from the attack of wild beasts; a neat reservoir contained clear water; a little garden supplied roots; and his retreat was well stocked with fruit-trees. Some young Rhahaans lived with him, and administered to his wants with pious respect. Though much emaciated, he seemed lively, and in full possession of his mental faculties; his age, he said, was eighty-seven. The Rhahaans, although subsisting on charity, never solicit alms, or accept of money; I

therefore presented this venerable prelate of the order with a piece of cloth, which was repaid by a grateful benediction. He told me, that in the convulsions of the Pegue empire, most of their valuable records had been destroyed; but it was traditionally believed, that the temple of Shoemadoo was founded 2300 years ago, by two merchants, brothers, who came to Pegue from Tallowmeou, a district of one day's journey east of Martaban. These pious traders at first raised a temple one Birman cubit * in height. Sigeamee, or the spirit that presides over the elements, and directs the thunder and lightning, in the space of one night increased the size of the temple to two cubits; the merchants then added another cubit, which Sigeamee doubled in the same short time. The building thus attained the magnitude of twelve cubits, when the merchants desisted; that the temple was afterwards gradually increased by successive monarchs of Pegue, the registers of whose names, with the amount of their contributions, had been lost in the general ruin; nor could he inform me of any authentic archives that had escaped the wreck.

In the afternoon, Dr Buchanan accompanied me in a ride about a mile and a half to the eastward of the fort. Thorns and wild bamboos grew in this direction close to the ditch, and the road lay through woods intersected by frequent pathways. We saw no other habitation, than here and there a poor Peguer's hut, beneath the shelter of a clump of bamboos; but the memorials of former populousness were thickly strewed. Hillocks of decayed masonry, covered with the light mould

* Twenty-two inches.

which time generates upon a heap of rubbish, and the ruins of numerous temples, meet the eye in every quarter. From these melancholy monuments we could trace the extent of the suburbs, which retained scarce any vestiges of former grandeur; they merely served to point out 'campos ubi Troja fuit.' We saw no gardens or inclosures, nor any cultivation on that side of the fort; but the pathways being trod by cattle, indicated that the country farther on was better inhabited, and probably in a state of higher improvement.

Returning from our excursion, we met Mr Wood, who, early in the morning, attended by his own servants, and some Birman guides, had crossed to the west side of the river, to amuse himself with a day's shooting. He found an inconsiderable village on the opposite bank, in the neighbourhood of which there were rice plantations that extended a mile westward. Beyond these he entered a thick wood, consisting chiefly of the bamboo and pipal trees. Through this wilderness he penetrated nine or ten miles, without meeting an inhabitant, or seeing a single dwelling. Some water-fowls and wood-pigeons were the reward of his toil.

South of Pegue, about a mile beyond the city walls, there is a plain of great extent, for the most part overgrown with wild grass and low brushwood, and bare of timber trees, except where a sacred grove maintains its venerable shade. A few wretched villages are to be seen, containing not more than twenty or thirty poor habitations. Small spots of land have been prepared by the peasants for tillage, who seem to live in extreme poverty, notwithstanding they possess in their cattle the

means of comfortable subsistence; but they do not eat the flesh; and I was told, what is remarkable enough, that they seldom drink the milk. Rice, gnapee, a species of sprat which, when half putrified, is made into a pickle, and used as a seasoning for their rice, and oil expressed from a small grain, with salt, are almost their only articles of food. Their cows are diminutive, resembling the breed on the coast of Coromandel; but the buffaloes are noble animals, much superior to those of India. I saw here, for the first time, some of a light cream-colour; they are used for draft and agriculture, and draw heavy loads on carts or small waggons, constructed with considerable neatness and ingenuity.

The groves before mentioned are objects of no unpleasing contemplation; they are the retreats of such Rhahaans or priests as devote themselves to religious seclusion, and prefer the tranquillity of rural retirement to the noise and tumults of a town. In their choice of a residence they commonly select the most retired spots they can find, where shady trees, particularly the tamarind and banyan, protect them from the noon-day sun. In these groves they build their kioums, and here they pass their solitary lives. All kioums or monasteries, whether in town or country, are seminaries for the education of youth, in which boys of a certain age are taught their letters, and instructed in moral and religious duties. To these schools the neighbouring villages send their children, where they are educated gratis, no distinction being made between the son of the peasant and of him who wears the tsaloe, or string of nobility. A piece of ground contiguous to the grove is inclosed for a

garden, where they sow vegetables and plant fruit-trees. The Indian sweet potato, and the plantain, being the most nutritious, are principally cultivated. The charity of the country people supply them abundantly with rice, and the few necessaries which their narrow wants require. Abstracted from all worldly considerations, they do not occupy themselves in the common concerns of life. They never buy, sell, or accept of money.

The only article of consequence manufactured at Pegue, is silk and cotton cloth, which the women weave for their own and their husbands use. It is wrought with considerable dexterity. The thread is well spun, the texture of the web is close and strong, and it is mostly checquered like the Scotch tartan; but they make no more than what suffices for their own consumption.

In the town of Pegue there are only three persons besides the Maywoon or viceroy, whose rank entitles them to distinction. These are, the Raywoon, Chekey, and the Sere-dogee. The first is an old man turned of seventy, still vigorous and active, who, it seems, had distinguished himself by his prowess in former wars, and obtained his present post as the reward of valour. He is also invested with high military insignia, and has the privilege of wearing on his head a gilded helmet, or basin, which is never used except on state occasions, when he exhibits a formidable representation of the meagre knight adorned with Mambrino's helmet. The Chekey is a middle aged man, dull and plethoric. Last in office was our acquaintance the Sere-dogee, about forty, sadly afflicted with the rheumatism. The assiduous attentions

of this good natured man, though perhaps dictated by policy, were both pleasing and useful, and, to appearance at least, perfectly disinterested. I had presented him with some trifles, a piece of muslin, one of silk, and a few yards of broad cloth; which he accepted, he said, not for their value, but as a token of my good opinion. He one day brought his daughter, a child of six years old, with him to pay me a visit. After taking notice of her, I spread a piece of Bengal silk over her shoulders, as is the custom when one makes a present to an inferior. The father thanked me with great cordiality, but returned the piece, saying, he feared I might think he brought the child with a view to extract a present; and that I should have occasion for all the articles I had got to give away, if I expected to satisfy every body who would look for a gratification. I disclaimed the first supposition, but could not overcome the delicacy of his scruples.

These officers exercise the function of magistrates, and hold separate courts at their own houses, for the determination of petty suits. Each has his distinct department, but this private jurisdiction is very limited. All causes of importance relating to property, and matters of an high criminal nature, are solemnly tried in open court. The three before-mentioned officers unite, and form a tribunal, which sits at the Rhoom, * or public hall of justice, where they hear the parties examine witnesses, and take depositions in writing. These depositions are sent to the Maywoon, who represents the king, and the judges transmit their opinions along with the evidence, which the

* Called Roundaye by Europeans.

Maywoon either confirms or rejects as he thinks proper, and, in cases of capital conviction, orders execution, or pardons the culprit. From his judgment there lies no appeal, except when it happens that an offender who holds an office under a royal commission is brought to trial. In that case, the minutes of the evidence taken in court must be forwarded to the council of state, to be by them submitted to the king, who himself applies the law; and awards the sentence.

We had now spent nearly three weeks at Pegue, and seen every thing worthy of notice; which, in a place lately rescued from a desert state, could not be very interesting or various. Gathering clouds and a gloomy horizon foretold the approach of the south-west monsoon; and we had reason shortly to expect the arrival of a royal messenger, to notify his majesty's pleasure in regard to our further progress. Having also several arrangements to make at Rangoon preparatory to our departure, it became expedient to appoint a day for quitting Pegue. I therefore intimated to the Maywoon my intention, and fixed on the 25th to take my leave, on which day I visited him in form. After half an hour's cheerful conversation, he asked me with much earnestness, whether we were pleased with the reception and treatment we had received. In return, I gave him the most ample assurances of our entire satisfaction, expressed my sense of his past kindness, and my reliance on his future friendship. He seemed happy to find that we were contented, and handsomely apologized for the restraint and apparent rudeness we had sustained on our first coming to Rangoon, which he said ori-

ginated in misconception. Thus we parted with perfect complacency on both sides.

Nor was this acknowledgment, on my part, mere matter of empty compliment; although I thought, that, on certain occasions, he might have relaxed from the ostentatious dignity which he cautiously preserved; yet he never was deficient in politeness. His attentions to our accommodation and convenience were unremitting; and we experienced, during the term of our residence, uniform civility from all his dependents, which, in fact, comprises the whole of the inhabitants of Pegue.

CHAPTER XI.

LEAVE PEGUE—REACH THE VILLAGE OF DEESA—ABUNDANCE OF GAME—BUFFALOES—THEIR ANTIPATHY TO THE COLOUR OF RED OR SCARLET—DEESA INFESTED BY TIGERS AND WILD ELEPHANTS—REACH RANGOON—GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF PEGUE, ERRONEOUSLY LAID DOWN IN MODERN MAPS—MEMBERS OF THE ENGLISH DEPUTATION RESIDE WITHIN THE FORTIFICATIONS OF RANGOON—MISTRUST EVINCED BY THE PRINCIPAL INHABITANTS—DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWN OF RANGOON—SWINE AND DOGS NUMEROUS—RECEIVE MUCH USEFUL INFORMATION FROM AN ITALIAN MISSIONARY—ACCOUNT OF THE PEOPLE CALLED CAREANERS—OF THE TEMPLE OE SHOEDAGONG—BIRMANS FOND OF RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS—ACCOUNT OF THE RHAHAANS, OR ECCLESIASTICS—MEET THE SEREDAW, OR HIGH PRIEST OF RANGOON—HIS CHARACTER—VIRGIN PRIESTESSES—REASON OF THE ABOLITION OF THEIR ORDER.

Captain Thomas and Dr Buchanan, with a proportion of the baggage and servants, left Pegue on

the 21st, to return to Rangoon; Mr Wood and myself were ready to embark on the 26th. We went on board in the afternoon, attended by the Nakhaan, two inferior officers of government, and the public interpreter; the remainder of our domestics followed in a separate boat. The heavy rains that fell during the night incommoded the rowers, and retarded our progress; next morning the weather cleared up, but towards noon the sky again became overcast, and seemed to promise a stormy night. About two o'clock we reached a village on the east bank, called Deesa, at which place we found two commodious houses unoccupied, close to the river. Our boatmen being fatigued, and there appearing no probability of being able to teach Rangoon by the night's tide, I judged it advisable to take up our quarters here until the morning.

Shortly after our arrival had been announced, the Miou-gee, or chief person of the village, came to pay his respects. He informed me, that at this season of the year his village, and those adjacent, were nearly deserted by the men, who were all sent on the service of government, to make salt by the sea-side, leaving their wives, children, and aged parents at home. The article of salt produces a considerable revenue to the state. The peasantry are employed in preparing it during the hot season. As soon as the monsoon sets in, they return to their habitations, and till their lands until the time comes round for a renewal of their annual labour on the coast, which does not occupy more than four months in the year.

Making inquiries respecting what game the country produced, the Miou-gee told me that it

abounded in various kinds, particularly deer; and that, if I chose to walk out with my gun, he would be my guide, and undertake to show me a herd of antelopes at no great distance. I accepted the offer with pleasure. We went through the village, which did not contain more than fifty houses, comfortable in appearance, and well raised from the ground. The women and children flocked to their doors, and screamed with astonishment at seeing such a phenomenon as an English officer dressed in his uniform. Proceeding to the eastward, about a mile from the town, we entered an extensive plain, where the tall rank grass had been consumed by fire, to allow the growth of the more delicate shoots as pasturage for the cattle. Here we soon discovered a herd of deer, but so watchful and wild, that I could only get near enough to fire a random shot from a rifle, which did not take effect. In endeavouring to approach them unperceived, I left my servants and guide at a considerable distance, and took a circuit by myself, out of sight of my companions. A drove of buffaloes belonging to the villagers happened to be nigh at the time that I discharged my gun. Alarmed at the noise, the whole troop raised their heads, and, instead of running away, seemed to stand on the defensive. I walked leisurely from them, when two came out of the herd, and, with their tails and heads erect, trotted towards me, not in a straight line, but making half a circle, as if afraid to advance. They were too near for me to think of escaping by flight, I therefore kept on at a moderate pace, in an oblique direction, stopping at times, with my face towards them, on which they also stood still, and looked at me; but

when I resumed my way, they immediately advanced. In this circuitous manner, one of them came so close, that I felt my situation extremely awkward. I had reloaded my rifle whilst I walked, but reserved it for an extremity. As the beast approached, I stopped more frequently, which always checked his progress for a time; but he had now drawn so nigh, that I expected every instant to have a direct charge made at me. Fortunately the Miou-gee, from a distance, discovered my situation. He hallooed out, and made signs, by taking off his blue cotton jacket, holding it up in the air, and then throwing it down. I immediately comprehended his meaning, and, whilst I edged away, slipped off my scarlet coat, which I flung, together with my hat, into some long grass, where they lay concealed. The buffalo instantly desisted from the pursuit, and returned towards the herd, quietly grazing as he retired. This circumstance proves, that the buffalo entertains the same antipathy to the colour of red or scarlet that some other animals are known to do. The Miou-gee, when I joined him, seemed quite as much alarmed as I was. He said, that if I had sustained any injury, his head would have paid the forfeit of the accident.

The country inland appeared to be cleared of trees and brushwood to a considerable distance; but on the banks of the river, to the north and south, the thickets bordered on the village, and I was told, abounded in jungle * fowl and peacocks;

* This is a bird well known to sportsmen in India. It differs little from the common barn-door fowl, except that the wild sort are all similar in colour—a dark red, with black breast and legs. The flesh is very delicate.

but my guide requested that I would not venture in, for fear of tigers, which he said, frequently came prowling round the village at night, and sometimes carried away their dogs, but durst not attack their buffaloes, who, to all appearance, were a match for any tiger, and almost as fierce. The inhabitants also complained of being much molested in the wet season by wild elephants, that occupy, in great numbers, a forest twelve miles to the north-east. These powerful animals, allured by the early crops of rice and sugar-cane, make predatory excursions in large troops, and do a great deal of mischief, devastating more than they devour. The poor peasantry have often to lament the destruction of their most exposed plantations.

Next morning, before daylight, we left Deesa with the first of the ebb. At ten o'clock we reached Rangoon, and landed at our former dwelling below the town. Baba-Sheen, who had travelled all night, arrived about the same hour from Pegue.

How much is it to be lamented, that the country we had just left, one of the fairest and most healthful on the globe, should remain, for the greater part, a solitary desert, whilst so many of the human race are condemned to languish away life in noxious regions, or extract, by incessant labour, a scanty subsistence from a barren soil! The natives of the adjacent islands of Nicobar, whose swollen limbs and diseased bodies evince the pestilential atmosphere they breathe, might here prove useful members of general society, live in the enjoyment of a salubrious climate, supply their own, and contribute to relieve the wants of others. But it must require a long and uninterrupted term of

peace to renew the population of Pegue. Should it ever be so fortunate, there can be little doubt that Pegue will be numbered amongst the most flourishing and delightful countries of the East.

The authorities on which the geography of the city and river of Pegue has been laid down, though doubtless the best that could be procured, are nevertheless far from being accurate. The Pegue river is called by the natives, Bagoo Kioup, or Pegue rivulet, to distinguish it from Mioup, or river. It is navigable but a very few miles to the northward of the city of Pegue, and for this it is indebted wholly to the action of the tide. It has no communication with the sea, except by the Rangoon river, and in the fair season, at low water, is almost dry. There seems to have been a mistake of this stream for the Sitang river, about fifteen miles east of Pegue, which is a great and independent body of water, that partly describes the course that in the map is given to what is called the Pegue river.

Nor does the meridian measurement of the city of Pegue, as reported by former travellers, at all correspond with later observations. Mr Wood, an accurate astronomer, and furnished with excellent instruments, places Pegue in 17° 40′ north latitude, above forty geographical miles south of the position assigned to it in the map. The difference in longitude is less than that of latitude. Mr Wood, from a mean of observations of the immersion and emersion of Jupiter's satellites, determines Pegue to be in 96° 11′ 15″, about thirty-two miles west of its supposed situation. This eastward error may have given occasion to the mistake of the Sitang river for that of Pegue. In-

deed the authorities for the geography of this country are, in most places imperfect, and in some altogether erroneous.

The ruinous state and uncomfortable situation of the dwelling assigned to us on our first arrival, rendered it desirable to remove into the town; and, as a proper understanding was now established with the Rangoon government, no objection whatever was made to our taking up our abode wherever we thought proper. I accordingly hired two large houses, one for the gentlemen of the deputation, the other for our attendants. These were made of timber, sufficiently spacious, but ill adapted to the climate, being close, and covered with tiles, which retained and transmitted the heat long after the sun had set. They were, however, the best that could be procured, and we felt ourselves more at ease from residing within the inclosure of what is called the fort of Rangoon.

Being freed from the restraint imposed on us before we went to Pegue, we now enjoyed the full liberty of collecting information, and seeing whatever was worth notice. Although a liberal license was thus granted to us, I still found, on the part of those persons who were best capable of communicating knowledge, a mistrustful unwillingness to reply to my questions, which they evaded, rather than declined answering; a conduct that created in me more regret than surprise. It was a natural jealousy, which at this time I did not think it prudent to increase, by minute inquiries into the internal state of the country, and the political economy of their government.

Increasing trade, and consequent population, have extended the present town far beyond the limits

that formerly comprehended Rangoon, as it was originally founded by Alompra. It stretches along the bank of the river about a mile, and is not more than a third of a mile in breadth. The city or miou * is a square, surrounded by a high stockade, and on the north side it is further strengthened by an indifferent fosse, across which a wooden bridge is thrown. In this face there are two gates, in each of the others only one. Wooden stages are erected in several places within the stockade, for musketeers to stand on in case of an attack. On the south side, towards the river, which is about twenty or thirty yards from the palisade, there are a number of huts, and three wharfs, with cranes for landing goods. A battery of twelve cannon, six and nine pounders, raised on the bank, commands the river; but the guns and carriages are in such a wretched condition, that they could do little execution. Close to the principal wharf are two commodious wooden houses, used by the merchants as an exchange, where they usually meet in the cool of the morning and evening, to converse and transact business. The streets of the town are narrow, and much inferior to those of Pegue, but clean, and well paved. There are numerous channels to carry off the rain, over which strong planks are laid, to prevent an interruption of intercourse. The houses are raised on posts from the ground; the smaller supported by bamboos, the larger by strong timbers. All the officers of government, the most opulent merchants, and persons of consideration, live within the fort. Shipwrights, and people of inferior rank, inhabit the

* Miou is a term applied either to a city or a district.

suburbs; and one entire street, called Tackally, is exclusively assigned to common prostitutes, who are not permitted to dwell within the precincts of the fortification.

Swine are suffered to roam about the town at large. These animals, which are with reason held unclean, do not belong to any particular owners; they are servants of the public, common scavengers. They go under the houses, and devour the filth. The Birmans are also fond of dogs, numbers of which infest the streets. The breed is small, and extremely noisy. Whenever we walked out, the inhabitants were apprised of our approach by the loud barking of these troublesome curs.

I was now honoured occasionally with visits from all the men of official consequence in Rangoon; but although they paid me this compliment, the greatest formality and caution were still preserved in their deportment and language. Baba-Sheen was the only person with whom we held familiar intercourse, and through him every attention was paid to our wants. From this conduct, however, I judged it prudent to suspend the astronomical observations, which Mr Wood was desirous to make, and not to employ my draftsman until a longer acquaintance had removed their suspicions.

Amongst the foreigners who came to pay their respects to the English gentlemen, was an Italian missionary, named Vincentius Sangermano, who had been deputed to this country about twenty years before, by the Society de Propaganda. He seemed a very respectable and intelligent man, spoke and wrote the Birman language fluently,

and was held in high estimation by the natives for his exemplary life and inoffensive manners. His congregation consisted of the descendants of former Portuguese colonists, who, though numerous, are in general very poor. They, however, had erected a neat chapel, and purchased for their pastor a piece of ground a mile from the town, on which a neat comfortable dwelling was built, and a garden inclosed. He is indebted for his subsistence to the voluntary contributions of his flock. In return for their charity, he educates their children, instructs them in the tenets of the Romish faith, and performs mass twice a day at the chapel.

From this reverend father I received much useful information. He told me of a singular description of people called Carayners, or Carianers, that inhabit different parts of the country, particularly the western provinces of Dalla and Bassien, several societies of whom also dwell in the districts adjacent to Rangoon. He represented them as a simple, innocent race, speaking a language distinct from that of the Birmans, and entertaining rude notions of religion. They lead quite a pastoral life, and are the most industrious subjects of the state. Their villages form a select community, from which they exclude all other sects; and never reside in a city, intermingle, or marry with strangers. They profess, and strictly observe, universal peace—not engaging in war, or taking part in contests for dominion—a system that necessarily places them in a state of subjection to the ruling power of the day. Agriculture, the care of cattle, and rearing poultry, are almost their only occupations. A great part of the provisions

used in the country is raised by the Carianers, and they particularly excel in gardening. They have, of late years, been heavily taxed and oppressed by the great Birman landholders; in consequence of which numbers have withdrawn into the mountains of Arracan. They have traditional maxims of jurisprudence for their internal government, but are without any written laws;—custom, with them, constitutes the law. Some learn to speak the Birman tongue, and a few can read and write it imperfectly. They are timorous, honest, mild in their manners, and exceedingly hospitable to strangers.

The temple of Shoedagon,* or Dagoung, about two miles and a half north of Rangoon, is a very grand building, although not so high, by twenty-five or thirty feet, as that of Shoemadoo at Pegue. It is much more ornamented. The terrace on which it stands is raised on a rocky eminence, con-

* The name of this temple, which signifies Golden Dagon, naturally recalls to mind the passages in the Scriptures where the 'house of Dagon' is mentioned, and the image of idolatry bows down before the holy ark.

'Next came one
Who mourn'd in earnest, when the captive ark
Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopt off
In his own temple, on the grunsel edge,
Where he fell flat, and sham'd his worshippers:
Dagon his name, sea-monster, upward man
And downward fish: yet had his temple high
Rear'd in Azotus, dreaded through the coast
Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon,
And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds.'

MILTON, B. I.

The resemblance is too striking to pass unnoticed; at the same time it should be observed, that analogies of this kind, though always pleasing, are often deceptive.

siderably higher than the circumjacent country. It is ascended by above a hundred stone steps, that have been suffered to fall into decay. The situation renders Shoedagon a conspicuous object at the distance of many miles. The tee, and the whole of the spire are richly gilded; which, when the sun shines, exhibit a singularly splendid appearance.

The small auxiliary buildings are yet more numerous than those that surround the base of the Pegue Temple. Perceiving that several of these were in a ruinous state, whilst the foundations of others were just laid, and some half finished, I asked why they did not repair the damages of the old before they erected new ones; and was told, that to mend a decayed praw or temple, though an act of piety, was not so meritorious as to erect a new one. That sometimes the old ones were repaired by those who were unwilling or unable to be at the expense of a complete building; but this entirely depended on the means and inclination of the donor.

The borders of the terrace on which the temple is raised are planted with shady trees in regular rows. From this eminence there is a beautiful and extensive prospect; the Pegue and Rangoon rivers are seen winding through a level woody country, and the temple of Syriam, little inferior to those that have been described, stands near the junction of the streams. The rainy monsoon had now set in, and inundations were formed in several places. It would have been a more pleasing, though perhaps less picturesque scene, had the plains been cleared, and the fields laid out for cultivation. We could observe few marks of improvement;

woods, lakes, and rivers, presented themselves on every side.

The road leading from the city to the temple is formed with care. A wide causeway in the centre prevents the rain from lodging, and throws it off to the sides. Numberless little spires are ranged along the edge of the road, in which are niches to receive small images of their divinity Gaudma. Several kioums, or monasteries, lay in this direction—generally removed a short distance from the public way, under the shade of pipal or tamarind trees.

The Birmans, like all the natives of the East, are fond of processions. Scarcely a week passes that there is not a religious display in Rangoon—either a funeral of some person who leaves sufficient to defray the expense of a pompous public burning, or the ceremony of admitting youths into the convents of the Rhahaans. On the latter occasion parents vie with each other, and spare no cost. The principal charge consists in entertainments, and the customary presents to the Rhahaans. The age of induction is generally from eight to twelve years. When a boy is to be introduced into a convent, either as a temporary resident, or with a view to future consecration, his friends prepare their offerings of cloth, rice, preserves, fruit, fans, cushions, mats, and household utensils. On an appointed day he parades the streets, dressed in yellow, and mounted on a horse richly caparisoned, led by two servants. A band of music goes before, and a party of Rhahaans encircle him. His male friends follow in a troop, and the females of their families bring up the rear

—the latter carrying on their heads the offerings meant for the Rhahaans. Thus they proceed to the convent of which the novice is to become a member, where he is presented in form to the senior of the brotherhood. This ceremony is repeated three times, and at each perambulation fresh presents are to be provided.

The kioums, or convents, of the Rhahaans are different in their structure from common houses, and much resemble the architecture of the Chinese. They are made entirely of wood. The roof is composed of different stages, supported by strong pillars; the inside comprehends one large hall; the whole house is open at the sides. Some are curiously carved with various symbolic representations of the divinity. There are no apartments for the private recreation of the Rhahaans. Publicity is the prevailing system of Birman conduct, and they admit of no secrets either in church or state.

From the many convents in the neighbourhood of Rangoon, the number of Rhahaans and Phonghis * must be very considerable;—I was told that it exceeded 1500. This estimate must include those in their noviciate. Like the Carmelites, they go barefooted, and have their heads close shaven, on which they never wear any covering.

Yellow is the only colour worn by the priesthood. They have a long loose cloak which they wrap round them, so as to cover most part of the body. They profess celibacy, and to abstain from every sensual indulgence. The prescribed punishment for a Rhahaan detected in an act of in-

* The inferior order of priests, vulgarly called Tallapoins.

continence, is expulsion and public disgrace. The delinquent is seated on an ass, and his face daubed with black paint, interspersed with spots of white. He is thus led through the streets, with a drum beating before him, and afterwards turned out of the city; but such instances of degradation are very rare. The juniors are restricted from wandering about licentiously, either by day or night. There is a prior in every convent, who has a discretionary power to grant permission to go abroad.

The Rhahaans never dress their own victuals, holding it an abuse of time to perform any of the common functions of life, which, so long as they occupy, must divert them from the abstract contemplation of the divine essence. They receive the contributions of the laity ready cooked, and prefer cold food to hot. At the dawn of the morning, they begin to perambulate the town, to collect supplies for the day.. Each convent sends forth a certain number of its members, who walk at a quick pace through the streets, supporting with the right arm a blue lackered box, in which the donations are deposited. These usually consist of boiled rice mixed with oil, dried and pickled fish, sweetmeats, fruit, &c. During their walk, they never cast their eyes to the right nor to the left, but keep them fixed on the ground. They do not stop to solicit, and seldom even look at the donors, who appear more desirous to bestow, than the others to receive. The Rhahaans eat but once a day, at the hour of noon. A much larger quantity of provision being commonly procured than suffices for the members of the convent, the surplus is disposed of, as charitably as it was gi-

ven, to the needy stranger, or the poor scholars who daily attended them, to be instructed in letters, and taught their moral and religious duties.

In the various commotions of the empire, I never heard that the Rhahaans had taken any active share, or publicly interfered in politics, or engaged in war. By this prudent conduct they excited no resentment. The Birmans and Peguers professing the same religion, whoever were conquerors equally respected the ministers of their faith.

I had heard much of the veneration paid to the Seredaw, or head of the Rhahaans at Rangoon, and by chance had an opportunity of seeing him. He lived in a very handsome monastery, half a mile from town, on the road leading to Shoedagon. One evening, taking my customary walk, I met him returning from the pagoda. There was nothing to distinguish him from the common Rhahaans; he wore the same yellow dress, and his head and feet were bare. His years and abstracted appearance induced me to ask who he was. On being told, I turned and joined company with him, for he would not have stopped or gone out of his way had a monarch accosted him. He entered freely into conversation, but kept his eyes fixed invariably on the ground before him. He was a little old man, of seventy-five, and still walked with firm step on even ground; but when he ascended the stairs of his dwelling, he required support. He goes every day, at the same hour, to the temple, to offer his devotions, and performs the journey, which, going and returning, cannot be less than four miles, on foot. Approaching his grove, he civilly asked me to come in and rest

myself. I followed him, and we took our seats on mats spread on the floor, in the centre of a large and lofty hall. Several young Rhahaans, who had attended him in his walk, ranged themselves at a small distance. I was, however, disappointed in the expectations I had formed. He betrayed a worldly pride inconsistent with his years and sacred function. He announced, with much pomp, that he was the head of the church at Rangoon; and ostentatiously displayed, engraven on iron plates, his sacerdotal titles, which had been conferred on him by the present and the late king. He seemed to possess little of the humility which distinguished the aged prelate of Pegue; and I left him, impressed with much less reverence than I had entertained for his character before our interview.

I was told, that formerly there were nunneries of virgin priestesses, who, like the Rhahaans, wore yellow garments, cut off their hair, and devoted themselves to chastity and religion; but these societies were long ago abolished, as being injurious to the population of the state. At present there are a few old women who shave their heads, wear a white dress, follow funerals, and carry water to the convents; and these venerable dames have some portion of respect paid to them.

CHAPTER XII.

POPULATION OF RANGOON—AN ASYLUM FOR INSOLVENT DEBTORS — RELIGIOUS TOLERATION GRANTED TO FOREIGNERS—PROVINCE OF DALLA, AND TOWN OF MAINDU—MIMA-SHUN-RUA, OR THE VILLAGE OF PROSTITUTES —BARBAROUS LAW RESPECTING THE FEMALE RELATIONS OF INSOLVENT DEBTORS—TREATMENT OF THE WOMEN—RIVER OF RANGOON COMMODIOUS FOR SHIP-BUILDING—SEVERAL SHIPS OF BURTHEN ON THE STOCKS—BIRMAN SHIPWRIGHTS—IMPERIAL MANDATE ARRIVES FOR THE ENGLISH DEPUTATION TO PROCEED TO THE CAPITAL—THE MAYWOON OF PEGUE ORDERED TO ACCOMPANY IT—HUNTSMEN EMPLOYED TO CATCH ALLIGATORS AND RHINOCEROSES—REVERENCE OF THE BIRMANS FOR THEIR BRAMINICAL ASTROLOGERS—THEY DECLARE A PROPITIOUS DAY FOR THE MAYWOON TO DEPART—HE LEAVES RANGOON—ENGLISH DEPUTATION PREPARES TO FOLLOW —DESCRIPTION OF THE BOATS, &c.

THE population of Rangoon is considerable. There are 5000 registered taxable houses in the city and suburbs. If each house be supposed to contain six people, the estimate will amount to 30,000. Having long been the asylum of insolvent debtors from

the different settlements of India, it is crowded with foreigners of desperate fortunes, who find from the Birmans a friendly reception, and, for the most part, support themselves by carrying on a petty trade, which affords a decent subsistence to those who act prudently. Here are to be found fugitives from all countries of the East, and of all complexions. The exchange, if I may so call the common place of their meeting, exhibits a motley assemblage of merchants, such as few towns of much greater magnitude can produce; Malabars, Moguls, Persians, Parsees, Armenians, Portuguese, French, and English, all mingle here, and are engaged in various branches of commerce. The members of this discordant multitude are not only permitted to reside under the protection of government, but likewise enjoy the most liberal toleration in matters of religion. They celebrate their several rites and festivals, totally disregarded by the Birmans, who have no inclination to make proselytes. In the same street may be heard the solemn voice of the Muezzin, calling pious Islamites to early prayers, and the bell of the Portuguese chapel tinkling a summons to Romish Christians. Processions meet and pass each other, without giving or receiving cause of offence. The Birmans never trouble themselves about the religious opinions of any sect, nor disturb their ritual ceremonies, provided they do not break the peace, or meddle with their own divinity Gaudma; but if any person commit an outrage, which the Mussulmen, in their zeal for the true faith, will sometimes do, the offender is sure to be put into the stocks; and if that does not calm his turbulent enthusiasm, they bastinado him into tranquillity.

The violence of the rainy monsoon prevented our making distant excursions, which, in the present stage of the mission, I should perhaps have avoided had the weather been favourable. Our morning rides and evening walks seldom extended beyond the great temple, that being the best road. Dr Buchanan one morning went across to the west side of the river, on the bank of which, opposite to Rangoon, is a considerable town, called Maindu, the residence of the governor of the province of Dalla, who has already been mentioned as having come down to meet the deputation on its first arrival. This government is entirely distinct from Rangoon, on the east side. The rank of the governor is much inferior to that of the Maywoon of Pegue; notwithstanding which, the latter cannot apprehend a criminal within the jurisdiction of Dalla, by his own authority. The city of Dalla, from whence the province takes its name, is said to be on the west side of the China Buckier river, and was formerly a place of considerable importance. The town of Maindu is composed of one long street. At the east end is a creek, which goes all the way to Bassien, and has twelve feet depth of water at high tide; on the west side is a smaller creek, on the bank of which stands a village called Mima-Shun-Rua, or the village of prostitutes, being inhabited wholly by women of that description.

Prostitution in this, as in all other countries, is the ultimate resort of female wretchedness. But here it is often attended with circumstances of peculiar and unmerited misery. Many who follow this course of life are not at their own disposal, nor receive the earnings of their unhappy profession. They are slaves sold by creditors to a licens-

ed pander, for debts more frequently contracted by others than by themselves. According to the laws of Pegue, he who incurs a debt which he cannot pay becomes the property of his creditor, who may claim the insolvent debtor as his slave, and oblige him to perform menial service until he liquidates the debt. Nor does the unhappy man always suffer in his own person alone; his immediate relatives are often included in the bond, and, when that is the case, are liable to be attached and sold to discharge the obligation. The wretchedness into which this inhuman law plunges whole families is not to be described. Innocent women are often dragged from domestic comfort and happiness; and, from the folly or misfortune of the master of the house, in which they perhaps have no blame, are sold to the licensed superintendant of the Tackally, who, if they possess attractions, pays a high price for them, and reimburses himself by the wages of their prostitution.

In their treatment of the softer sex the Birmans are destitute both of delicacy and humanity, considering women as little superior to the brute stock of their farms. The lower class of Birmans make no scruple of selling their daughters, and even their wives, to foreigners who come to pass a temporary residence amongst them. It reflects no disgrace on any of the parties, and the woman is not dishonoured by the connexion.

Respecting the trade of Rangoon, the commodities which the country is capable of producing, the present state of its commerce, and the obstacles that check its growth, I shall have occasion to speak more at length in another part of this work.

It is sufficient here to observe, that teak, the most durable wood, that is known, and best adapted for the construction of ships, is produced in the forests of the Birman and Pegue empires in inexhaustible abundance. The river of Rangoon is equally commodious for the construction of ships. The spring tides rise twenty feet in perpendicular height. The banks are soft, and so flat that there is little need of labour for the formation of docks. Vessels of any burden may be built. Nature has liberally done her part to render Rangoon the most flourishing seaport of the Eastern world.

There were at this time several ships from 600 to 1000 tons burden on stocks. One belonging to the Maywoon of Pegue, about 900 tons, was considered by professional men as a specimen of excellent workmanship. It was entirely wrought by Birman carpenters, and formed on a French model, as are most of the ships built in this river, the Birmans having received their first rudiments of the art from that nation. Three or four vessels of burden were likewise in a state of forwardness, belonging to English adventurers; and one still larger than the rest, almost ready to be launched, the property of the governor of Maindu, the town on the opposite side. If this ship was not composed of prime materials, the building at least was well attended to. Every morning the governor's wife crossed the river in her husband's barge, attended by two or three female servants. After landing, she commonly took her seat on one of the timbers in the yard, and overlooked the workmen for some hours, after which she returned home, and seldom missed coming back in the evening, to see that the day's task had been completed. The

slip on which the ship was built happened to be contiguous to our first habitation, a circumstance that caused us to remark her constant visits. Curiosity, however, did not prompt her, or any of her attendants, to come within our precincts, whilst decorum deterred us from making advances towards an acquaintance. Her husband never accompanied her, and she did not seem to require his aid. Women in the Birman country are not only good housewives, but likewise manage the more important mercantile concerns of their husbands, and attend to their interests in all outdoor transactions. They are industrious to the greatest degree, and are said to be good mothers, and seldom from inclination unfaithful wives. If this be a true character, they meet with a most ungenerous return, for, as was before observed, the men treat them as beings of a very subordinate order.

Whilst we admired the structure and materials of these ships, we could not overlook the mode in which the work was executed, and the obvious merit of the artificers. In Bengal, a native carpenter, though his business is commonly well done, yet, in his manner of performing it, excites the surprise and ridicule of Europeans. He cuts his wood with a diminutive adze, in a feeble and slow manner; and when he wants to turn a piece of timber, has recourse to a coolee, or labourer, that attends him. Numbers there compensate for the want of individual energy; notwithstanding this, they finish what they undertake in a masterly manner. The Birman shipwrights are athletic men, and possess, in an eminent degree, that vigour which distinguishes Europeans, and gives them pre-eminence over the enervated natives of the

East; nor do I imagine that the inhabitants of any country are capable of greater bodily exertion than the Birmans.

The month of May was now far advanced, and we became a little impatient at remaining so long in a state of uncertainty, especially as the officers of government did not at all relax in the formality and coldness of their deportment, nor were we yet assured what might be the nature of our reception at court. From this unpleasant state of suspense we were at length agreeably relieved by the arrival of a letter from the Maywoon of Pegue to the council of Rangoon, acquainting them that he had received the imperial mandate to make preparations for our conveyance by water to the capital; and that it was his majesty's farther pleasure that he should accompany the deputation in person. Baba-Sheen lost no time in imparting to me the intelligence, which was soon after communicated by an official message from the Raywoon, inviting me to the Rhoom, or public hall, to hear the order formally announced in council. This was a ceremony which I begged leave to decline; but I sent my Moonshee, or Persian secretary, to attend the meeting.

Our visit to Ummerapoora being now a measure decided on by the highest authority, it became requisite to make some inquiries respecting our accommodations for the voyage. Being well aware that no steps could be taken except through the regular channels of authority, I applied to the Raywoon to obtain permission to purchase suitable boats for the use of the deputation. An inferior officer waited on me, to represent, on the part of the Raywoon, that it was inconsistent with the

usage of their government to admit of a public minister being at any expense for his conveyance; and that the superintendant of the port had received instructions to prepare as many boats as I thought necessary. This, I understood, was an established point of etiquette, from which they could not possibly recede. I expressed regret at putting the government to so great an expense; but requested, as the season was boisterous, and the voyage not a short one, that the vessels might be examined by an English shipwright, and such alterations made as would render them commodious to Europeans, which the boats of the natives, both from their structure and insufficient covering, are far from being. My desire met a cheerful compliance.

Conformably to the imperial mandate, the Maywoon left Pegue, and arrived at Rangoon on the 25th of May. His retinue was numerous; and as no person of high official consequence, when summoned to attend the Golden Feet, can assure himself of returning to his government or office, in order to be prepared for whatever might occur, he brought with him his wife and family as the companions of his voyage. On the day after his arrival I paid him a visit. He was extremely civil, and assured me of his ready services on every occasion.

About this time an order came from court to the provincial government of Pegue, which furnished a subject of much conversation. I was told that the Emperor of China, having never seen a rhinoceros or an alligator, entertained an ardent desire to view those formidable animals before his

death, and had intimated his wish, through a provincial legate from Yunan, who had lately arrived at Ummerapoora for the purpose of settling some mercantile arrangements. The king of Ava, solicitous to gratify his august brother of China, had signified his pleasure to his chief minister, who sent the order before mentioned, the purport of which, I understood, was to catch twenty alligators, and as many of the rhinoceros tribe, and convey them to the metropolis, whence they were to be transported to the imperial city of Pee-Kien. Those who made elephant-hunting their profession, were despatched to the forests, and strong nets were thrown across the Pegue river, on the sands of which, when the tide ebbed, I had seen, in the course of my journey to Pegue, a much greater number than his majesty required. The fishermen began successfully. Several alligators were taken in two or three days, and put into boats, in the bottom of which wells were constructed. The crocodile and alligator, although they are accounted amphibious animals, cannot long support life out of the water. The rhinoceros hunters, I afterwards learned, were not equally fortunate.

In a former part of this work it has been mentioned, that the Birmans, notwithstanding they are Hindoos of the sect of Boodh, and not disciples of Brahma, nevertheless reverence the Brahmins, and acknowledge their superiority in science over their own priests or Rhahaans. The partiality which the king, who is guided in every movement by astrological advice, manifests in their favour, has given celebrity to their predictions, and brought them so much into fashion, that there is not a viceroy or Maywoon who has not in his household

some of these domestic sages, whom he consults on all important occasions, and sometimes on occasions of no importance whatever. The Maywoon of Pegue, whose viceroyalty, though not the most extensive, is the most lucrative in the empire, maintains a number of Brahmins, whose counsel he desired as to the most fortunate day and hour to commence the journey. After due deliberation, the 28th of May, at eight o'clock in the morning, was pronounced the most propitious for departure, and that time was accordingly appointed. Unluckily our boats could not be got in readiness quite so soon; but as there was no resisting the stars, the Maywoon declared his regret at the supernatural necessity that compelled him to precede us, promising, however, to wait at the head of the Rangoon river, where it branched from the great stream of the Irrawaddy, until we should join him, the distance being not more than two days' journey. I acquiesced in the propriety of submitting every temporal concern to the disposal of Fate, and hoped that he would not suffer any consideration for us to interfere with his own arrangements. On the day fixed, at seven in the morning, he passed our habitation, and proceeded with much pomp to the water-side, himself on horseback, his lady in a palanquin, and his children carried astride on men's shoulders. His own barge was very handsome, and of the structure appertaining to nobility. It was attended by several war-boats ready manned, with a number of common vessels, some belonging to his retinue, others to merchants, who took the opportunity of his protection to transport their merchandise duty free. The Maywoon reposed for a short time in

the house that is used as an exchange; and when the great drum that proclaimed the hour struck the first stroke, he stepped on board, and was followed by his family. In an instant every boat pushed from the shore with a loud shout. The oars were vigorously plied, and, the flood-tide setting strong, the fleet was soon carried to the northward of the city.

The boats, six in number, that had been provided for our accommodation, were now ready to receive us. Dr Buchanan, Mr Wood, and myself, had each a separate vessel. The Hindoo Pundit, whose religious prejudices rendered it irksome to him to mingle with Mussulmen, had likewise a small boat to himself. The guard, and such attendants as we did not immediately require, occupied another of a larger size, in which our heavy baggage, field equipage, &c. were stowed. A kind of cutter was equipped as a kitchen, which was seldom wanted, as our own barges were sufficiently spacious to admit of all culinary purposes, without inconvenience to the inhabitants. These barges were of a very different construction from the flat-bottomed vessels called budgerows, that are used on the Ganges. Ours were long and narrow, and required a good deal of ballast to keep them steady. Even with ballast, they would have been in constant danger of oversetting, had they not been provided with outriggers, which, composed of thin boards, or oftener of buoyant bamboos, make a platform that extends horizontally six or seven feet on the outside of the boat, from stem to stern. Thus secured, the vessel can incline no farther than until the platform touches the surface of the water, when she immediate-

rights. On this stage the boatmen ply their oars, or impel the boat forward by poles. Such an addition affords a convenience unknown to the navigation of the Ganges. It is the place exclusively appropriated to the crew, who sleep on it at night, and, by putting up mats, or spreading a sail from the roof of the boat to the outside edge, shelter themselves from the weather. My barge was sixty feet in length, and not more than twelve in the widest part. By taking away one thwart beam near the stern, laying a floor two feet below the gunwale, and raising an arched roof about seven feet above the floor, a commodious room was formed, fourteen feet long, and ten wide, with a closet behind it. At the stern there was a stage, on which the Ledegee, or steersman stood, and a vacant space of seven or eight feet, where a kettle might be boiled, or dinner provided. On each side of the cabin a small door opened on the platform; and there were three windows, which, when raised, admitted a free circulation of air. The roof was made of bamboos covered with mats; and over all was extended a painted canvas, that effectually secured us from the heaviest rain. The inside was neatly lined with matting. The conveyances of the other gentlemen were nearly of the same size and construction. Twenty-six boatmen composed the crew of my vessel, exclusive of the Leedegee, who is the chief or captain.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEPART FROM RANGOON--ALTERATION IN THE TEMPERATURE OF THE AIR—REACH PANLANG—MOSQUITOES UNUSUALLY NUMEROUS AND TROUBLESOME—PASS KETTOREE-RUA, OR PARROQUET VILLAGE—TOWNS OF YANGAIN-CHAIN-YAH, AND DENOOBEW—A HANDSOME TEMPLE—SEGAHGHEE—SUMMEINGTOH—YEOUNGBENZAH—SINGULAR APPEARANCE OF A TREE—TAYKYATT—TERRIATO, OR MANGO VILLAGE—TAAMBOOTERRA—KIOUMZEIK, OR CONVENT STAIRS—INDIGO PLANT—BIRMAN METHOD OF PREPARING IT FOR USE—MANUFACTORY OF COTTON CLOTH—SHWAYEGAIM—SABBAYMEOUN—GNAPEEZEIK—VIOLENT CURRENT—YEAGAIM—KANOUNGLAY, OR LITTLE KANOUNG—RICH PLANTATIONS—KANOUNGGHE, OR GREAT KANOUNG—SLOW PROGRESS—MEYAHOUN—GILDED TEMPLES, AND SPACIOUS CONVENTS—NUMEROUS TRADING BOATS—COUNTRY FRUITFUL—PASHEEM—KIANGGAIN—VIOLENT GUST OF WIND—TIRROUP-MIOU, OR CHINESE TOWN—MOUNTAINS—TZEEZAU—PEEING-GHEE—A SHIP ON THE STOCKS—BEAUTIFUL APPEARANCE OF THE BANKS—GREAT DIFFICULTY IN SURMOUNTING THE STREAM—EXTRAORDINARY EXERTIONS OF THE BOATMEN—FLEET DISPERSED—BAGGAGE-BOAT LOST—THE FLEET REASSEMBLES—REACH THE CITY OF PEEAYE-MEW, OR PROME.

On the 29th of May we were ready to depart. Our baggage and attendants had been previously sent on board, and the boats containing the royal presents had received their lading from the Sea-Horse. We embarked in the evening, slept on board, and at ten o'clock next morning, when the tide served, pushed off, accompanied by our civil acquaintance, the Sere-dogee of Pegue, Baba-Sheen, Jacob Aguizar, the Armenian merchant, and the chief interpreter of Rangoon. These personages had boats of their own. Pauntchoo, my Portuguese servant, being with me, and three or four of the boatmen speaking a little of the Hindostan language, I was at no loss to make myself understood. An under Seree, or inferior clerk, was stationed in my boat, professedly to attend to my wants, and receive my orders, and probably with a view to observe and report my actions. It was, however, an ostensible compliment, and accepted by me in that light.

We rowed without intermission until three in the afternoon. A short way from Rangoon the river becomes narrow, with a winding course, owing to which we did not advance more than three leagues in a direct line. We passed a small village on the left, the banks on each side were shaded with trees. The fleet brought to on the north side of the river, when Dr Buchanan went on shore, and found an extensive plain covered with short grass, beyond which there was a large village. We experienced a pleasing alteration in the temperature of the air on the water, from what we had felt on shore. The day before our departure, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the thermometer

in the house stood at 98°; next day, at the same hour, the quicksilver only reached 90° on the river. When the flood made, we got under-weigh, rowed hard all night, and anchored in the morning near a town called Panlang, which the Seree informed me had once been a city of considerable magnitude, and from which the Rangoon river is frequently called the Panlang-mioup. The number of boats that were moored near it, indicated that it was still a place of some importance. The soil is rich, but there appeared to be little cultivation in its neighbourhood. Here a branch of the river shapes its course to the south. At two in the afternoon we pursued our voyage, and continued rowing till seven in the evening, when we brought to, having passed three small villages in the way, one of which was surrounded by thick groves of plantain trees. At this place we spent a very comfortless night; it is a part of the river remarkable for being infested by mosquitoes of an unusual size, and venomous beyond what I ever felt in any other country. Two pair of thick stockings were insufficient to defend my legs from their attacks. When in bed the curtains afforded some protection, but the servants, and even the boatmen, got no rest all night. A kind of reed that grows on the bank, breeds and harbours these insects in the utmost abundance. Fortunately, the colony does not extend many miles. A war boat that rows quick can escape them; but a heavy vessel must lie for one tide within their action.

On the first of June, at daybreak, we left Panlang, and stopped about nine o'clock at a hamlet on the right, where we saw a few gardens, and several travellers passing along a road at some

distance on the plain. The river here contracts greatly, and does not appear to be more than two hundred yards across. Our people having taken refreshment, we continued our voyage. After leaving Panlang, the influence of the tide becomes much weaker, and the water during the ebb is fresh. Our progress was but slow, having neither wind nor stream to befriend us. In three hours we reached Kettoree-Rua, or Parroquet village; and in two hours more came to Yangain-Chain-Yah. Here we entered the great river, and stopped for the night, our boats being fastened with hawsers to the bank. The course of the stream was nearly north and south, and about a mile wide.

Next morning, at the dawn of day, we pushed off; and at one o'clock joined the Maywoon, who, with his suite, and a vast concourse of boats, was waiting our arrival. He sent a polite message with a present of some milk, fine rice, and fruit. Heavy rains falling, we remained here all day. The banks were steep, and there was nothing to attract notice. At a distance on the opposite shore we could perceive the temple of Denoobew.

At eight o'clock in the morning of the 3d of June, the whole fleet got under weigh. Being now in the great river, and no longer sheltered by high and close banks, we spread our canvas, and, favoured by a strong southerly wind, sailed against the stream. At nine we passed Denoobew, an extensive town, ornamented with a lofty temple, resembling Shoedagon in form, but of smaller size. The adjacent fields appeared cultivated. Several large mercantile boats were lying here, and more at a small village on the opposite side. The river

was still low; the rains, although set in, had not yet materially affected it. We passed, in the course of our day's journey, many islands of sand formed by different streams of the river in the dry season, but which are entirely covered when the waters swell. On some of these islands there are trees and verdure. We left the towns of Segahghee on the east, and Summeingtoh on the west. Our journey this day was very delightful. The weather turned out fine, and the wind was so favourable, that though the stream was strong, we passed the banks at the rate of three miles an hour. There were not less than a hundred sail of boats of different sorts in company, and the whole was a cheerful and pleasing sight. The Maywoon being considered as commodore of the fleet, his movements regulated the rest. We stopped at sunset near the town of Yeoungbenzah, where I missed the Sere-dogee of Pegue, who seldom failed making an evening visit to drink tea, and ask questions about England. Baba-Sheen told me, that he was left behind at the head of the Rangoon river, where he was bargaining for another boat, his own being rather crazy, and so deeply laden with merchandise that he durst not venture it on the great river.

We left Yeoungbenzah at day-break, and passed in our course several islands of sand. In one place we perceived the roots and stump of a tree growing close to the water's edge, under a high bank, about fourteen feet beneath the surface of the soil. This singular appearance is to be accounted for by supposing, that where the bank was now raised, there had formerly been a sand level with the water, on which a tree took root, and

had been covered by annual accumulations from the river during the season of inundation. It is probable that the tall reeds and coarse grass, which every year rot and incorporate with the sand of the river, form the fine soil of the plains:—thus aquatic exuviæ are to be discovered every where deep in the earth. The stream, however, washes away on one side as much as it deposits on the other; and, as is the case with all rivers flowing through champaign countries, is continually changing its channel. In the morning we passed Taykyatt, a long and straggling town on the west side; also Terriato, or Mango village—small, but beautifully situated on a high commanding bank that overlooks the country on the opposite side to a great distance. It is surrounded by groves of mango trees, from which it takes the name. Taambooterra, on the same side, is a long town. The country, in this journey, did not appear so well inhabited as that we passed through the day before. At half past four we came to, for the night, at Kioumzeik, or Convent Stairs. A long sand intervened between us and the town. At this season the convex side of the windings of the river always terminates in a level sand. Two temples, not large, but gilded on the outside from top to bottom, made a very brilliant appearance. There were here many monasteries, and the Rhahaans belonging to them were strolling up and down the banks, as curiosity led them. Near the river side were some fields planted with indigo, which throve in full luxuriance, and was nearly ripe—the natives prepare it without any skill. A large quantity of the weed was steeping in an old boat sunk in the river, which was substituted in the room of a vat.

They do not take the trouble, or perhaps do not know how, to purify and reduce it to hard refined consistence, but are satisfied with it in a liquid state. They use it to colour a coarse kind of cotton cloth, which is manufactured here in great quantities. The indigo is very cheap, and doubtless might, by proper management, be cultivated in this country to the highest advantage.

The town of Kioumzeik is well built, and seems to be in a state of improvement. There are several interruptions in it, caused by water-courses, over which good wooden bridges are built. The manufacture of cotton cloth is the source of its prosperity. A town called Henzadah, near to Kioumzeik, is of much greater antiquity. Numerous cartroads and pathways evince that there is an extensive communication maintained with the interior country; but we saw little cultivation of grain, and only a few gardens. Buffaloes and other cattle were grazing in large herds on the neighbouring plain.

On the next day, June 5th, we put off at the first dawn, and passed, in the course of our journey, several small villages, none of which presented any thing worth notice. Sekayebeeim, on the east, was the most considerable. The bank on one side was high, and the sands extensive on the other. The course of the river runs deep beneath an overhanging bank, at a sluggish rate, not exceeding a mile in the hour. The southerly wind was not so strong as usual, and the temperature of the air had become much hotter. The thermometer, which on the preceding day stood at 78°, on this rose to 86°; but still the heat was not oppressive. We brought to, in the afternoon, south of a

town called Ackeo. The evening was cloudy, and threatened a thunder storm. A long and low strand lay between the boats and the town. I did not go on shore. Dr Buchanan, however, ventured, and met with nothing to repay the trouble he took in traversing a plain of heavy sand.

We set off the following morning at the usual hour, and saw a few villages, but none remarkable. One on the east bank was situated in a large garden of plantain trees. At noon our boatmen tracked the boats along the sands, and thus made greater progress than they could either by rowing or setting with poles. Notwithstanding the general name of the river is Irrawaddy, I learned that different parts of it are distinguished by different appellations, taken from places of note on its banks—as though we should call the Thames, at appropriate places, the Gravesend river, the London river, &c. At two o'clock the sky lowered, and black clouds in the north-west quarter threatened one of those violent gusts which are frequent at this season. The Ledeegee, of his own accord, brought to on the west side, under the shelter of an high bank. As soon as the boat was made fast, the Doctor and I clambered up the steep. The country round was covered with reeds as tall as a man's head. There were many pathways leading through them; but we were dissuaded by the Birmans from entering, for fear of tigers, which are numerous here, and particularly frequent that kind of cover. The storm broke before it reached us; and, after a delay of two hours, we set sail with a southerly wind. Passing a large village on the west, the Seree told me it was named Shwaye-

gaim, and that the inhabitants sometimes, during the rainy season, found gold dust in the sand of the river, which is washed down by the periodical rains. A town nearly opposite, on the east side, is called Sabbaymeoum. It was eight o'clock in the evening when we stopped close to the town of Gnapeezeik. Gnapee, or Napee, a sort of sprat, half pickled and half putrid, has already been described as a favourite and universal sauce used by the Birmans to give a relish to their rice. Zeik signifies a landing-place; whence we concluded that this town is an emporium for that commodity, which, in itself, forms an extensive branch of traffic.

Early in the morning we left Gnapee, and had to contend against a strong current, with very little assistance from the wind. The western bank was planted with pipal and mango trees. Yeagaim, on the right, and Kanounglay, or little Kanoung, on the left, were the most remarkable places. Near the latter we saw several plantations of fruit-trees, the mango, plantain, jack-fruit, and custard apple. The fields near it were regularly laid down, and well fenced. Many boats, some of them of a large size, were building on the banks, and the general aspect of things denoted peace and plenty. A little time brought us to Kanoungghe, or Great Kanoung, a long town, with a good quay, and well constructed wooden stairs, consisting of one hundred steps, descending to the water's edge. The population of this part of the country must be considerable. In getting round a bluff point we found much difficulty, owing to the rapidity of the current. The fleet was, in consequence, widely scattered, some surmounting the stream with more ease than others: the wind was but

faint, and the weather exceedingly sultry. At two o'clock the thermometer rose to 94°. Our boatmen being harassed, I brought to early in the evening, under a pleasant bank—the Maywoon had got far a-head. Before tea I walked out with my gun, but had no success, seeing only a few quails and some wild pigeons. The country was tolerably well cleared; and, though there was not much cultivation, it seemed in a state of preparation for the husbandman.

Our progress on the following day was more expeditious. We soon reached the neighbourhood of Meyahoun, formerly Loonzay, rendered memorable in the wars between the Birmans and Peguers. It is a very ancient city, stretching two miles along the margin of the river. Houses in cities or in villages differ very little; but this town was distinguished by numerous gilded temples, and spacious convents. A great variety of tall wide-spreading trees gave the place an air of venerable grandeur; and under the shade of these, several Rhahaans were luxuriously reposing. We saw not less than two hundred large boats at the different quays, which, on an average, might be reckoned each at sixty tons burthen, all provided with good roofs, and masted after the country manner. They seemed much better constructed than the unwieldy wullocks * of Bengal. I was informed, that the neighbourhood of Meyahoun is uncommonly fruitful in rice, and that a large quantity is exported annually to the capital. Here also were capacious granaries belonging to the king, built of wood, and covered with thatch. These are always kept filled with grain ready to be transported to any part of

* A heavy boat used on the river Ganges.

the empire in which there happens to be a scarcity; a misfortune that sometimes occurs to the higher provinces, where the annual rains are neither so certain nor so copious as in the southern districts. This wise and humane institution strongly evinces the solicitude of the monarch for the welfare of his people. Leaving Meyahoun, we passed Pasheem, whence a nullah, or water-course, leads to the south-west; also Kianggain. At both these places there were a number of trading boats. At half past two o'clock we were assailed by a violent north-west gust of wind, that, acting with the current, drove us back nearly two miles before we could reach the shore. The river here was more than a mile wide, although it had not yet attained its full monsoon height. At four we again got under way, and saw, on the east side, Tirroupmiou, or Chinese Town. During our journey this day we plainly discerned the Anoupectoumiou, or great western hills that divide this country from Arracan. The particular mountains in sight, the boatmen said, were named Taungzo. The districts we passed through this day were exceedingly populous, and in most parts cultivated. We brought to late in the evening, under a steep bank, near the inconsiderable village of Tzeezau.

We left, before daylight, a very uncomfortable situation. The night was sultry, and the high bank that hung over us prevented a free circulation of air. Added to this, we were annoyed by myriads of stinking insects that issued from the reeds and coarse grass. The pleasantness of the day compensated for the inconveniences of the night. As we advanced, the western range of hills closed upon the river, and in some places display-

ed very beautiful scenery. Approaching the town of Peeing-ghee, on the west side, the rocky banks rose abruptly to the height of two or three hundred feet, the sides of which were richly clothed with hanging trees of variegated foliage. The confinement of the water in this place increased its rapidity, and I could not but admire the exertions made by the boatmen in stemming so violent a stream. Oars were useless, and the perpendicular banks afforded no footpath to track. It therefore became necessary to impel the boat forward by bamboo poles, a labour at which the Birmans are uncommonly expert. When the pole is firm in the ground, they place the top of it against the muscles of the shoulder, just above the collar-bone; then, raising that shoulder, and bending forward, they bring the whole weight of the body to bear upon the end of the pole. In this manner they traverse the platform from stem to stern, following each other in quick succession on both sides of the boat, having small thwart bamboos fastened on the platform, a yard asunder, to prevent their feet from slipping. Owing to this mode of fixing the end of the pole against the muscles that reach from the back of the neck to the shoulder, a callosity is formed, and a Birman boatman always appears to be high shouldered. I could not discover why they preferred that method to the more obvious and easy one of pushing with the flat of the shoulder; they, however, performed what I am persuaded none but Birmans could effect. We were an hour in passing the extreme force of the current, which did not exceed four hundred yards.

The town of Peeing-ghee, and that of Sahlah-dan, a little above it, export a great part of the

teak timber that is carried to Rangoon. The forests extend along on the western mountains, and were in sight from the boats. The trees are felled in the dry season, and, when the monsoon sets in, are borne by the torrents to these towns. There was a ship on the stocks close to Peeing-ghee, of 400 tons burthen. A Mussulman merchant from Surat, out of economy, chose this place for building at, in preference to Rangoon. He meant, as soon as the hull should be finished, to float it down the stream. I was told that there was a good deal of hazard in the navigation, the distance of which, including the windings of the river, probably exceeds 150 miles; but he calculated the difference of expense to be adequate to the risk. This adventurer furnished a proof of the confidence that might be placed in the Birman government, and the security that a stranger has for his property. The teak tree, although it will grow on the plains, is a native of the mountains. The forests, like most of the woody and uncultivated parts of India, are extremely pestiferous. An inhabitant of the champaign country considers a journey thither as going to inevitable destruction. The wood-cutters are a particular class of men, born and bred in the hills; but even they are said to be unhealthy, and seldom attain longevity.

The difficulty of this day's journey had dispersed the fleet; the lightest and best manned boats of course got a-head of the rest, and several were obliged to join their crews, and carry up each vessel singly by their united strength. Half a mile above Sahlahdan I overtook the Maywoon, who had arrived some time before me, and was waiting for us. The boatmen being greatly harassed, he

recommended us to pass the night here. In the evening we took a walk together. The Maywoon was attended by eight or ten servants armed with spears and muskets. We both fired at game without success. The Birmans, even the common boatmen, are fond of fowling to a degree of childish delight; rather than not shoot, they will fire at sparrows. I never was more importuned than by them for shot, which they do not know how to fabricate. No schoolboy could be more pleased than the Ledeegee of my boat, when I one evening lent him a gun to shoot wild pigeons. In this, as well as many other particulars, their disposition is strikingly contrasted with the habits of apathy and indolence that characterize the natives of Asia in general. My companions, Dr Buchanan and Mr Wood, not joining the party before dark, I expressed my apprehensions about them to the Maywoon, who was so good as to despatch a warboat to their assistance. The Doctor came about ten o'clock, but Mr Wood's people being quite exhausted, he was obliged to stop three miles short of us, and the baggage-boat did not arrive at all. A little after midnight I was awakened to receive the unpleasant intelligence that she was wrecked. The boatmen, it seems, had nearly surmounted the difficult passage below Peeing-ghee, when, either from a remission of their efforts, or a more impetuous gush of water than usual, the boat suddenly got stern-way, and when once she lost ground there was no recovering it. The boatmen resigned her to the current, which swept her back with irresistible violence. Fortunately she set towards the side, where a landing was practicable, and, taking the ground on a rocky bottom, she bulged,

and filled with water. The people got on shore safe, and it was expected that most of the articles on board would be recovered; but such as were liable to injury from the water were irretrievably spoiled.

Early the next morning, June 10th, Mr Wood joined company, and the Maywoon sent an officer to Peeing-ghee, with directions to procure a proper conveyance for my people, and render them every possible assistance; he likewise intimated to me his desire to remain three or four days at Meayday, a town and district two days journey north of Prome, which he holds in jaghire by a grant from the king. This intention was far from being disagreeable to me or to any of the party, as our boatmen were fatigued, and the servants and the guard required a short time to adjust their conveniences for the remainder of the voyage.

The country contiguous to the river, in this day's journey, was pleasingly diversified with hill and valley, and with spots of cleared ground and hanging woods. The range of mountains retired in a westerly direction as we advanced to the north, but smaller hills still skirted the river. We sailed before a fine southerly breeze, and enjoyed a climate far more temperate than I ever experienced in Hindostan at the same season of the year.

We left, a-stern on the west, Podang-mew, a large and populous city; on the right, Shwaye-do-mew was the most important town. About noon we stopped to avoid a squall from the north-west. In the evening, my boat being a-head, I reached the city of Peeaye-mew, or Prome, on the east side. The other gentlemen did not cross the river till next morning.

CHAPTER XIV.

DESCRIPTION OF PROME—SURPRISE EXCITED BY AN EUROPEAN—PROME SOMETIMES CALLED TERREKETTEREE—ORIGIN OF THE NAME—SINGULAR ANALOGY—VILLAGE OF POUOO-DANG—TEMPLE—ZEE-AIN—KAMMA—NE-OUNGBENZEIK—GALE OF WIND—YEOUNGBEN-ZEIK—SIRRIAPMEW—TREES—SOIL—MEEA-DAY—HOUSE ERECTED FOR THE ENGLISH AGENT—MODE OF STRUCTURE—BIRMANS PUNCTILIOUS IN WHATEVER RELATES TO RANK—TOWN OF MEEADAY—INDULGENCE TO STRANGERS—CULTIVATION—INVITED BY THE MAYWOON TO VISIT HIS GARDENS—RE-MARKS—MEET A CARAVAN—CURIOUS STONE—NUMEROUS VISITANTS—LEAVE MEEADAY—PASS MEEALSAH-GAIM—REACH LONGHEE—VISIT A KIOUM—TRADITION RESPECTING LONGHEE—ROMANTIC SCENERY—TIGERS NU-MEROUS—CATTLE—SOIL—PRODUCE—EX-CURSION OF THE PORTUGUESE PANTCHOO—TANGHO—A FORT AND CITY OF IMPORTANCE—BEETLE NUT—KAYNS, OR MOUNTAINEERS—SHAWBUNDER ARRIVES—HIS WHIMSICAL APPEARANCE.

Prompted by curiosity to view a place so re-nowned as Prome is in Birman history, for having been the scene of many long sieges and bloody conflicts, as soon as my boat was made fast I has-

tened on shore, and a short way from the bank entered a long strait street, in which I walked for near a mile. The buildings were not remarkable; but, though I saw little to notice, I found that I was myself an object of universal wonder. An English officer, dressed in uniform, was a phenomenon perhaps never before seen in this part of the world. My attendants also created no little surprise. The dogs, numbers of which infested the streets, set up a horrid barking; the men gaped, the children followed me, and the women, as usual, expressed their astonishment by loud laughter and clapping their hands; yet not the least indication of contempt was manifested, nor any thing done that could be construed into an intention to offend. Whichever way I turned, the crowd respectfully opened, and the most forward were restrained by others. The notice I took of a little girl, who was alarmed at our appearance, seemed to be very gratifying to the parents, and the mother, encouraging her child, brought her close to me. Had I entered a house, I have no doubt but the owners would have offered me the best it contained. Kindness to strangers is equally the precept and the practice of Birmans.

At the upper end of the present city are to be seen the ruins of the ancient fort of Prome. It had been a small pentagon, built of brick, and, from its situation, must have been very strong. The modern fort is nothing more than a palisaded enclosure, with earth thrown up behind it. Low hills on the eastern side approach the town, in which the rains have formed channels down to the river, that are crossed by wooden bridges. I passed some stone-cutters' yards, where artificers were

manufacturing flags for pavements, and slabs and vases for the use of temples, out of a fine free-stone which is found in that neighbourhood. Adjacent to the town there is a royal menagerie of elephants, consisting of two rows of lofty well-built stables, in which these animals are lodged during the rains. I saw some that had been lately caught, under the discipline necessary to render them docile.

The city of Prome, and the province in which it stands, are the jaghire, or estate of the second son of the king; they likewise give him his title. Prome is sometimes called Terreketteree, or single skin; and the Birmans have an old legendary tale respecting the origin of this name. It is related, that a favourite female slave of Tutebongmangee, or the mighty sovereign with three eyes, importuned her lord for a gift of some ground; and being asked of what extent, replied in similar terms with the crafty and amorous Elisa, when she projected the site of ancient Carthage. Her request was granted, and she used the same artifice. The resemblance of the stories is curious.

I had not leisure to go through the whole of the town, but was informed that it contained more inhabitants than Rangoon, and had a better supplied market. The Seree told me, that the ruins of a large fort and city, much surpassing the present, stood about a league eastward of the town. The lateness of the hour, however, prevented me from continuing my researches.

We departed from Prome at an early hour on the 11th of June, and sailed before a strong southerly gale, till we came to Pouoodang, a small village built on the western bank of the river. A

high hill, of a conical form, rises abruptly behind it, on the top of which there is a temple of peculiar sanctity, having once been the abode of Guadma. The impression made by the foot of the divinity is shown indented on a slab of marble. The Maywoon had gone before us to perform his devotions at this place of worship. The hill seemed difficult of ascent. Several of our people went up; but the day being wet and stormy, I declined the undertaking. We afterwards made head against a violent current, by the aid of a tempestuous wind. There was, for a long way, little improvement close to the river. Obscure hamlets, at distant intervals, just served to show that the country was not without inhabitants. Zeeain, on the west, appeared a pretty village. Towards evening we reached Kammah, on the east side. It is the chief town of a district that bears the same name, and makes large exports of teak timber for the Rangoon market.* We did not stop here, but continued our course as far as Neoungbenzeik, where we arrived too late to make many observations. This also is a town of some respectability. We were here on a lee shore, under a high and rocky bank. The Maywoon, not liking the appearance of the weather, and thinking it unsafe to remain in such a situation all night, ordered the boatmen to row across to a long sand, where we might be secure from danger in the event of a storm. Nor was this precaution ill timed; for about midnight it blew a hurricane. We, however, ran no risk; our boats touched the soft sand, and were moored by strong hawsers, reaching from the stem and stern to the shore. Mr Wood and Dr Buchanan, who had not come up, found shelter in

a creek, where they passed the night. As soon as the storm commenced, the Maywoon detached a war-boat to their assistance.

Our associates joined the fleet betimes in the morning, and we sailed immediately. Our journey this day was disagreeable, from the violence of the southerly wind, which, meeting the stream, caused a heavy swell. The boats pitched deep, and were very uneasy. We passed a small village on the left bank, whence, I was told, a road leads through the mountains to Arracan. Yeoungbenzeik, or Indian fig-tree stairs, on the east side, is a fine village, situated in a romantic country; so also is Pelon, a place remarkable for boat-building; and Samban, famed for its iron manufactory. At a particular part, the river was divided into two distinct branches, separated by a sand. Each branch we judged to be a mile wide; and when the water rises so as to overflow the sands, the breadth cannot be less than four miles from bank to bank. Every village we saw was ornamented with one or more small temples. In the evening we brought to, at a town called Sirriapmew. The country around was pleasingly diversified with swelling grounds covered with stately trees, particularly with the tamarind and mango. Dr Buchanan measured one of the latter, and found it, at the height of his shoulder from the ground, twelve feet in circumference. Some of the tamarind and pipal trees seemed still larger. Many of the rising grounds were planted with indigo; but the natives suffer the hills, for the most part, to remain uncultivated, and only plough the rich levels. They everywhere burn the rank grass once a year to im-

prove the pasture. We saw many people at labour. The soil is a fine mould, and would produce abundant crops in proper hands. But the Birmans will not take much pains; they leave half the work to Nature, which has been very bountiful to them. Their thirst for conquest does not seem to have enriched their country.

In the morning, when we left Sirriapmew, the wind blew as usual from the southward with great violence. At noon we reached Meeaday, the personal estate of the Maywoon of Pegue, who is oftener called, from this place, Meeaday Praw, or Lord of Meeaday, than by his vice-royal titles. Here, in compliance with the wishes of the Maywoon, we proposed staying a few days.

It is a mark of respect, and a distinction of rank, for a person journeying on the water to have houses built for his accommodation on the banks, at the places where he means to stop. When the king goes on the river, or travels by land, buildings of the royal order of architecture are erected wherever he is to halt. In the manner of constructing houses, whether temporary or lasting, strict observance is paid to the form, which is indicative of the rank of the occupant; nor dare any subject assume a mode of structure to which he is not legally entitled. The distinction consists chiefly in the number of stages of which the roof is composed. The subordination of rank is maintained and marked by the Birmans with the most tenacious strictness; and not only houses, but even domestic implements, such as the bettle box, water flaggon, drinking cup, and horse furniture, all express and manifest, by shape and quality, the precise station of the owner. Nor can one person intrude upon

the rights of another, under penalty of incurring a most severe punishment, which is never remitted. The Maywoon had obligingly given directions to have a house constructed on the bank for us, of the order appertaining to nobility, but of what particular class I could not easily ascertain ; and I refrained from minute inquiries, as it might appear fastidious, and give an unfavourable impression to those whom it was my inclination to conciliate.

The materials of which these houses are made are always easy to be procured; and the structure is so simple, that a spacious, and by no means uncomfortable dwelling, suited to the climate, may be erected in one day. Our habitation, consisting of three small rooms, and a hall open to the north, in little more than four hours was in readiness for our reception. Fifty or sixty labourers completed it in that time, and, on emergency, could perform the work in much less. Bamboos, grass for thatching, and the ground rattan, are all the materials requisite. Not a nail is used in the whole edifice. A row of strong bamboos, from eight to ten feet high, are fixed firm in the ground, which describe the outline, and are the supporters of the building. Smaller bamboos are then tied horizontally by stripes of the ground rattan, to these upright posts. The walls, composed of bamboo mats, are fastened to the sides, with similar ligatures. Bamboo rafters are quickly raised, and a roof formed, over which thatch is spread in regular layers, and bound to the roof by filaments of rattan. A floor of bamdoo grating is next laid in the inside, elevated two or three feet above the ground. This grating is supported on bamboos, and covered with mats and carpets. Thus ends the process, which is not more

simple than effectual. When the workmen take pains, a house of this sort is proof against very inclement weather. We experienced, during our stay at Meeaday, a severe storm of wind and rain; but no water penetrated, nor thatch escaped. And if the tempest should blow down the house, the inhabitants would run no risk of having their brains knocked out, or their bones broken; the fall of the whole fabric would not crush a lady's lap-dog.

Having got possession of our dwelling, Mr Wood, Dr Buchanan, and myself, took a walk to view the town and adjacent country. Our boats had brought to at the southern extremity of Meeaday. It is a place of no great magnitude, but extremely neat. There are two principal streets, and at the north end of the present town are to be seen the ruins of a brick fort, which, like all other forts of masonry in the Birman empire, is in a state of dilapidation. At a short distance there is a pleasant river which flows through a fertile plain affording some rich pasture-ground, and interspersed with plantations of tobacco. On the south and south-east sides, the town is inclosed by a deep ravine, the banks of which are cut perpendicular; and the remains of an old brick wall were discoverable, which was probably a defence to the former suburb. We observed many small temples and convents apart from the town, situated in groves of mango, tamarind, and pipal trees of uncommon stateliness and beauty. The Maywoon had a residence here; also a pleasure house and bettle garden at some distance. Notwithstanding his manners were still very formal, and evidently desirous of little personal intercourse, he continued invariably attentive, and daily sent me such presents as

he thought would be acceptable, such as fruit, fish, and milk. Although it is sinful, according to the Birman tenets, to deprive any being of life to satisfy a carnivorous appetite, yet the inhabitants do not scruple to kill game of all kinds, and abstain only from domestic animals. Even in this they often relax, and always grant a most liberal indulgence to strangers. I was allowed to send my Portuguese servant to the neighbouring villages to purchase fowls, which we got very good, and sometimes were able to procure kids. The Birman farmers do not breed sheep, goats giving so much more milk. It was privately intimated to me, that there would be no crime if a servant of mine should shoot a fat bullock when he met one; that it would be ascribed to accident, and I might make reparation to the owner, who would think himself amply recompensed for his loss by two tackles, about six shillings; and the beast being dead, there could be no sin in eating it; but that a public sanction could not previously be given to slaughter one. I declined supplying our table by this evasive logic, and preferred the want of beef to the risk of giving offence, and wounding the feelings of people who omitted no opportunity to manifest towards us hospitality and kindness.

North of the town, about a mile, there is a good deal of cultivation, chiefly of rice; the fields were well laid down, and fenced. This quarter is beautifully wooded, and diversified with rising grounds. We observed many cartroads and pathways leading into the country in various directions. The soil is composed of clay and sand, and in some places is very stony, particularly near the river. Early on the 14th, the Maywoon politely sent us

an invitation to accompany him on the same evening to his garden-house. I was not well, and excused myself. Mr Wood was otherwise engaged, but the Doctor undertook to represent us. The Maywoon supplied him with a horse for his conveyance, and rode himself. They crossed the small river before mentioned, and traversed a country partly cultivated, and partly wooded. The road was indifferent, and led through two very neat villages. They also passed several straggling houses, which, considered as country cottages, were extremely comfortable. In their way they saw a caravan of waggons, which had come from a great distance, loaded with goods of different sorts for traffic. The inhabitants in many places were employed in clearing the ground, and burning the long grass and brushwood. On arriving at the garden, about five miles distant, the Maywoon and his company, among whom the Doctor was the most distinguished, were regaled with tea and sweetmeats, and returned late in the evening nearly by the same road.

In the course of our walks, not the least curious object that presented itself was a flat stone, of a coarse grey granite, laid horizontally on a pedestal of masonry, six feet in length, and three wide, protected from the weather by a wooden shed. This stone, like that at Pouoodang, was said to bear the genuine print of the foot of Guadma; and we were informed, that a similar impression is to be seen on a large rock situated between two hills, one day's journey west of Memboo. On the plane of the foot upwards of one hundred emblematical figures are engraven in separate compartments. Two convoluted serpents are pressed be-

neath the heel, and five conch shells, with involutions to the right, form the toes. It was explained to me as a type of the creation, and was held in profound reverence. There is said to be a similar impression on a rock * on Adam's Peak, in the island of Ceylon. And it is traditionally believed, both by the Birmans, the Siamese, and the Cingaleze, that Guadma, or Boodh, placed one foot on the continent, and the other on the island of Ceylon. The neighbouring Rhâhaans had no objection to my painter's taking a copy of it, a task that he performed with great exactness.

On our return, we met a caravan of waggons travelling from the southern country towards the capital, eighteen in number. These vehicles were well constructed, and more commodious and neat than the clumsy gawries or carts of India. Each waggon was drawn by six bullocks, and several spare ones followed, to supply the place of any that might fall sick or lame. A good tilted roof of bamboo, covered with painted cloth, threw off the rain. They contained not only merchandise, but also entire families, the wives, children, monkies, cats, parroquets, and all the worldly substance of the waggoner. Each bullock had a bell under his throat. The wheels not being greased, a horrid noise announced the approach of the caravan long before it could be seen. They travel slowly, from ten to fifteen miles a day. At night the waggons are disposed in a circle, and form a barrier, within which the carriers feed their cattle, light fires, and dress their victuals, secure from the at-

* See Baldæus—also Knox's Historical Relation of Ceylon.

tacks of tigers, which much infest the less populous parts of the empire.

We remained at Meeaday until the 22d of June. During our stay I made short excursions to different parts of the country, and found little variation in its appearance. It was very beautiful, though but half cultivated, and I was every where treated with respect. The news of the mission had reached the place before we arrived, and excited a general curiosity to see the Boomien of the Colars, or the general of the strangers, as they were pleased to denominate me. Not only the better class of the inhabitants of Meeaday came to visit us, but likewise people of condition from all the towns and villages twenty miles round. I have sometimes received eight or ten different companies in a morning. When a party wished to be introduced, a message was sent to ask permission; which being obtained, they entered the room in a crouching position, and sat down on their heels, men and women alike. They always brought a gift of something, whatever they supposed might be acceptable. Tobacco, onions, fine rice, &c. No company presented themselves empty handed. It would not have been respectful; of course their offerings drew from me a suitable return, such as fillets of Indian muslin to the women, and a Cossembuzar silk handkerchief to the men. Several parties of women came unaccompanied by their husbands, or any of their male friends; and according to the notions entertained by them, there was nothing indecorous in it. They were unconcious of any thing but an innocent desire to gratify curiosity, and manifest respect. Women of a better class were always accompanied by a train of female attend-

ants; and, like the sex every where, were more lively, good humoured and inquisitive, than the men.

Early on the 22d of June matters were arranged for the prosecution of our voyage, and the fleet was in readiness to depart. The articles saved from the boat that had been wrecked below Peeing-ghee were dried. Our attendants, however, had suffered a material loss; but a serviceable boat had been provided for them in lieu of the one that was lost. At eleven o'clock we pushed off, the Maywoon leading the van. The day turned out tempestuous and gloomy, and the wind blew hard from the south. In a short time we passed Meealsah-gain on the west, a large village at the foot of a fine swelling wooded lawn, ornamented with some neat temples. Our way through the water was very rapid, not less than five miles an hour, and at one time, it blew so violently that we were obliged to make for the shore. The range of hills, which in our course this day approached nearest to the river, were covered with a blue mist. We passed some villages of no note. The country seemed populous, and herds of cattle were grazing on the banks. About seven o'clock we brought to for the night, on the west side.

At seven in the morning, after a night of unremitting rain, we left an uncomfortable situation, and sailed till we came to an extensive island, which divided the river into two branches. We took the eastern side, and, on account of the inclemency of the weather, brought to at the lower town of Loonghee, opposite the south extremity of the island. The width of the stream between the

main land and the island is about 500 yards. In the afternoon the rain ceased, but the wind continued. Dr Buchanan and I walked to a convent of Rhahaans, that seemed to be of more than ordinary note. We found it a good building, and, ascending a flight of steps, took the liberty of entering without ceremony. The neatness of the inside corresponded with the external appearance. A number of Gaudmas, richly gilt, and of various sizes, were ranged on a bench to receive the adorations of the pious. It was the eighth day of the moon, which is the Birman sabbath, and several persons were sauntering up and down, waiting for the hour of prayer. The superior, a man advanced in years, was sitting on his elevated seat when we went in. He expressed much surprise at our appearance and dress, but was extremely civil. He presented me with a scroll, written with a stylus on a papyrus leaf, which, he said, contained a sacred exhortation, and requested I would preserve it in remembrance of Shoedagonga Seredaw, which, it seems, was his title. He asked why the Doctor did not wear a scarlet dress like mine; and being informed of his profession, begged a prescription for a sore throat, which almost hindered him from articulating. The Doctor promised to send him a gargle, and we took our leave.

The infant son of the Maywoon had been unwell for some time, and his illness had now increased to a dangerous height. The anxious parent sent Baba-Sheen to me to intimate his desire of remaining where we were until his child grew better, the tempestuousness of the weather agitating the boat so much that he was afraid it might increase the fever. I had no scruple in indulging so

natural a wish; but as the spot we were in was much exposed, and had many disadvantages, we moved to a more commodious situation, nearly two miles farther on, opposite the north end of the island. A war-boat was despatched express to the capital to bring down medicine, and a celebrated professor of physic. In the mean time all the physicians of the country, to the number of twenty, were assembled, to consult and prescribe for the sick infant.

Longhee, or Great Cable, takes its name from the following circumstance. A curious ligament of stone unites a pointed rock, which rises in the middle of the stream, with the opposite bank. It has the appearance of a petrified cable; and the natives relate, that one hundred years ago a large rope floating down the river, ceased its course at this place, and that one end adhering to the rock, and the other to the bank, the rope was changed into stone. They also say that the opposite island formerly constituted a part of one situated fifteen miles higher up, but was severed from it by an earthquake, and carried down to the place where it now rests. The quality which the waters of the Irrawaddy possess of changing wood into stone, of which we afterwards saw innumerable instances, renders the transmutation of the cable by no means an impossible circumstance. The Birmans, however, are deeply tainted with that credulity which ignorance is ever disposed to pay to tales of fiction, and to miraculous events.

Whether removed by an extraordinary convulsion of nature, and by a still more extraordinary transportation, or whether encircled by the river from the disposition that all large streams flowing

through a level country have to change their channel, would, perhaps, be difficult to ascertain; but, whatever may have been the cause, the island now constitutes a principal object in one of the finest sylvan scenes I ever beheld. From a temple above Loonghee, that stands by the river side, on a commanding cliff whose summit overhangs its base, the eye is gratified by a most delightful combination of natural beauties. A fine sheet of water three miles in breadth, broken by an island more than a mile long, and half a mile wide, covered with trees of luxuriant foliage; eminences on the opposite shore, that rise from gently swelling grounds clothed in wood, to brown and rugged mountains, which, receding in an oblique direction, leave to the view a long and level plain. These all together form a landscape which I never saw equalled, and, perhaps, is not to be excelled. How much did I regret that my draftsman, though skilful in copying figures and making botanical drawings, was unacquainted with landscape painting and perspective, and that not one of ourselves possessed any knowledge of that delightful art! Had Mr Daniel, in his Oriental Travels, visited this part of the world, the view from Loonghee would have stood conspicuous among those faithful and excellent representations by which he has locally introduced India into England, and familiarized the European eye to the rich scenery of the East.

We continued at this charming place until the 2d of July, when the child of the Maywoon, notwithstanding the prescriptions of twenty doctors, was declared out of danger. So long as recovery continued doubtful, I sent the Hindoo pundit every

morning to inquire after his health. This attention was taken in good part, and the pundit obtained the honour of being introduced into the sick-chamber, where he witnessed the most amiable demonstrations of parental tenderness. Both the father and mother were kneeling by the side of the infant's bed, and attended on him themselves day and night. The disorder proved to be an inflammatory fever, and their treatment of it was perfectly simple. Tea made of wild thyme, and decoctions of several vegetable productions, were the only medicines administered. The rest was left to Nature, who accomplished her part. They did not, however, neglect to call in the aid of supernatural remedies. Incantations were used and amulets applied, to the efficacy of which much was attributed. Whatever might have been the cause, the recovery of the child afforded very general satisfaction. Every body seemed to feel an interest in his fate.

We made several short excursions during our continuance at Longhee. The country to the southward was well cultivated, and the fields inclosed by strong hedges of thorn. The soil is light and sandy, with many loose stones; the ground, for the most part, uneven, and rising into gentle acclivities. There were several neat villages within the distance of two or three miles. A deep ravine, formed by the moonsoon rains, extended inland from the river, the banks of which were covered with stunted trees. Dr Buchanan, in following its course, perceived in the sand the fresh tracts of a tiger, and prudently returned. On inquiring, I understood that the adjacent woods

contained many of these destructive beasts, who frequently at night come down the bed of the water-course to quench their thirst at the river. I went the next day with the Doctor and an armed party to the place, and plainly traced in the sand the footsteps of two tigers, a large and a small one. This discovery rendered us cautious of pursuing game into the forests. We found partridges, hares, quails, and wood-pigeons, in the open fields; but the jungle-fowl, or wild poultry, kept close in the thick covers, where we heard the cocks crow, but did not venture after them. We saw on the island, which is a very romantic spot, a few deer, and three buffaloes. The former were extremely wild. We fired at them without success, but were more fortunate in killing a number of pigeons of a beautiful plumage and excellent to eat.

The cattle used for tillage and draft in this part of the country are remarkably good. They put only a pair in the plough, which differs little from the plough of India, and turns up the soil very superficially. In their large carts they yoke four, and often six. Walking out one day, I met a waggon drawn by four stout oxen, going at a hand gallop, and driven by a country girl standing up in her vehicle, who seemed to manage the reins and a long whip with equal ease and dexterity. This was a novel sight to a person accustomed to the slow moving machines of India, in which the women are almost too timorous to ride, much less to attempt to guide.

The soil in the neighbourhood of Loonghee is very favourable for the cultivation of cotton. We saw many fields planted with it, in which the shrub was growing strong and healthy. In one

field a man was sowing sesamum. The light dry grains answer here better than rice, which thrives only in low and moist grounds.

My Portuguese servant Pauntchoo, whom I had despatched along with a Birman in quest of fowls and kids, was absent for three days; a circumstance that gave rise to some uneasiness on his account, from the fear of his having been devoured by tigers. He, however, returned safe, and informed me that he had been to a town nine leagues distant, and in his way passed through several villages, and a country thickly inhabited. When he had concluded his bargain, he procured a small cart to carry his purchase to Loonghee, and could not prevail on the owner to accept of any thing more than a Cossembuzar silk handkerchief. All the manufactures of India are highly prized by the Birmans, although many articles are not at all superior to what they make themselves. Pauntchoo also reported, that there was a well-frequented road leading to the city of Tongho, which was distant fifteen days' journey, the capital of a rich and populous province that bears the same name, and is governed by one of the king's sons, who takes his title from it, being called Tongho Teekien, or prince of Tongho. He added, that its inhabitants excelled in the manufacture of cotton cloth, and their country produced the best beetle nut in the empire,—a luxury in which Birmans of all ranks indulge so freely, that it is become with them almost a necessary of life. In one of Pauntchoo's expeditions across the river, he met with a village inhabited by Kayns, a race of mountaineers perfectly distinct from the Carianers, and speaking a language differing radically both from theirs and

that of the Birmans. They were originally inhabitants of the Arracan mountains, whom the Birmans, since their conquest of that kingdom, have prevailed on, partly by force, and partly by mild treatment, to abandon their native hills, and settle on the plain. There are several small societies of these people established near the foot of the mountains farther north. The Carianers are not to be found higher up than the city of Prome.

Every thing was now in readiness for us to take our next departure, and the first of July was fixed upon to leave Loonghee. On the morning of the 29th of June we were surprised by an unexpected visit from the Portuguese Shawbunder of Rangoon, who has already been mentioned as having been at Ummerapoora, the capital, at the time of our first arrival. He had been ordered down from court to meet the deputation, and came with all the pomp that his station would allow him to display. His barge was profusely decorated with colours, and his boatmen were dressed in uniform. On landing, he first paid his compliments to the Maywoon, and afterwards waited on me at my boat.

The appearance of this naturalized Portuguese was calculated rather to excite laughter than respect. He wore a long tunic of old velvet decorated with tarnished gold lace, and on his head a broad brimmed hat flapped, bound also with gold. He spoke the language of Hindostan imperfectly, but well enough to make himself understood. After an awkward salutation, half in the Birman, half in the European manner, he informed me that he had been sent by an order from the Lotoo, or Grand Council, to meet the English deputation, and

to acquaint me that his Majesty had been pleased to direct, that three officers of distinguished rank should proceed to Pagahm-mew, a city seven days journey below Ummerapoora, to wait our arrival, and escort us to the capital. The king, he observed, had done me the extraordinary honour to send a royal barge for my personal accommodation, with two war-boats to tow it. This was considered as a flattering mark of his majesty's good inclination, and we drew from it a favourable omen. To have our barge drawn by war-boats was an honorary privilege granted only to persons of the first consequence. It is grounded on the idea, that it is inconsistent with the dignity of a man of high rank to be in the same boat with people of such mean condition as common watermen. It is a singular refinement, and furnishes an additional instance of the characteristic pride of the nation. The Shawbunder displayed great shrewdness in his conversation. He asked me several questions respecting the powers with which I was invested; and as the visit might in some degree be considered as official, I in part gratified his curiosity, by explaining in general terms the nature of the mission, and the capacity in which I expected to be received, without at all disclosing the specific objects I had in view.

CHAPTER XV.

LEAVE LOONGHEE—EXTENSIVE ISLAND—KEENDOO PRAW—MEEGHEOUNG-YAY, OR CROCODILE TOWN — MEEIN-YAH — PATANAGOH — MAGWAY—SPANZIEK—STRONG CURRENT—HILLS CLOTHED WITH WOOD—MAYNBU—SHOE-LEERUA, OR GOLDEN BOAT VILLAGE—GOLD THE TYPE OF EXCELLENCE—YAYNANGHEOUM, OR PETROLEUM CREEK—PETRIFIED WOOD—BARREN COUNTRY—PENGKIOUM—SEMBEWGHEWM—SILLAHMEW—MANUFACTORY OF SILK—CROTOLARIA JUNCEA—MOUNTAIN OF POUPA—SEENGHOO—BULLOCK SLAIN BY A TIGER—YOOS, AN UGLY RACE—TEMPLE OF LOGAHNUNDAH—CITY OF PAGAHM—NEOUNDAH—BIRMAN DEPUTIES—MUSIC—DANCING—BEAUTIFUL MANUFACTORY OF LACKERED WARE—TEMPLE OF SHOEZEEGOON—DESTRUCTIVE CONFLAGRATION—NUMEROUS RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS—GIGANTIC FIGURE OF THE DIVINITY IN A RECUMBENT POSTURE—ANOTHER IMAGE ERECT—OLD MILLS.

THE Shawbunder left Loongheo on the first of July, to announce our appproach to the Birman officers, who were already arrived at Pagahm. We postponed our departure until the following day, and at seven in the morning quitted this pleasing

and rural place. In our journey we passed many towns and villages. Sometimes we went swiftly through the water, at others we were stationary, and even lost ground, as the wind frequently subsided, and the stream was very rapid. The range of Arracan mountains appeared to recede westward; and about three o'clock we came to a large island formed by separate arms of the river. There was a pyramidical temple on it, called Keendoo Praw, and several smaller ones raised on a high terrace. I estimated the extent of the island to be two miles. At the upper end we crossed the river, and stopped a mile above Meegheoung-yay, at past seven in the evening.

Meegheoung-yay, or Crocodile Town, is a place of much trade and importance. There were not less than 100 large boats, and several smaller ones, lying at different stairs, which, my people said, were taking on board rice, onions, garlic, and oil, for the consumption of the capital. It stands on a very high bank, and has fewer religious buildings than any town we had seen of equal magnitude. Dr Buchanan went on shore at daybreak, and observed in his walk some neat farms, each of them containing four or five cottages, better built than houses in towns usually are. They were fenced round with wide inclosures to receive the cattle, of which there was great abundance. The fields were divided by thorn hedges. The low grounds prepared for rice, and the higher planted with leguminous shrubs, or left for pasture.

Early on the 3d, we passed Meeinyah. Between that and Patanagoh, on the eastern shore, there was a sloping bank planted with indigo, which was then ripe, and the villagers were cutting

it. Melloon, on the west side, seemed rich in temples, but the town was no way distinguished. Patanagoh had only one temple, which was splendidly gilded. It is a long straggling village, and every house had a comfortable garden, enclosed by a bamboo railing, with orchards of palmyra, plantain, and mango trees. Here, likewise, were many boats of burthen waiting to receive a cargo. Numerous villages were scattered along the banks, which, as the wind blew strong, and we were obliged to keep in the middle of the river, there was no opportunity of examining. This day we passed some sandy islands, and brought to early in the evening, on the eastern side, between the towns of Magway and Spanziek. I took a walk before tea, and could discover little cultivation in the vicinity of the river. The land was stony, and covered with low thorn trees, in which we saw jungle-fowl and other game. Herds of young cattle were grazing among the thickets. We crossed some cartroads, and met several peasants.

At daybreak next morning we set sail with a fair and steady wind, by the force of which the fleet stemmed a strong current. Low woody hills skirted the river, particularly on the eastern side. On the summits of some of these hills temples were raised; and one on the western bank, called Maynbu, appeared to be considerable. The river, except where it was interrupted by islands, could not be less than two miles across. We passed a village named Shoe-Lee-Rua, or Goldenboat Village, from its being inhabited by watermen in the service of the king, whose boats, as well as every thing else belonging to the sovereign, have always

the addition of shoe, or golden, annexed to them. Even his majesty's person is never mentioned but in conjunction with this precious metal. When a subject means to affirm that the king has heard any thing, he says, 'It has reached the golden ears.' He who has obtained admission to the royal presence, has been at the golden feet. The perfume of otta of roses, a nobleman observed one day, 'was an odour grateful to the golden nose.' Gold, among the Birmans, is the type of excellence. Although highly valuable, however, it is not used for coin in the country. It is employed sometimes in ornaments for the women, and in utensils and ear-rings for the men; but the greatest quantity is expended in gilding their temples, on which vast sums are continually lavished. The Birmans present the substance to their gods, and ascribe its qualities to their king.

After passing various sands and villages, we got to Yaynangheoum, or Earthoil (Petroleum) Creek, about two hours past noon. The country now displayed an aspect differing from any we had yet seen. The surface was broken into small separate hills, entirely barren, and destitute of vegetation, except some stunted bushes that grew on the declivities, and in the dells, and a few unhealthy trees immediately in the neighbourhood of the villages. The clay was discoloured, and had the appearance of red ochre. We were informed, that the celebrated wells of Petroleum, which supply the whole empire, and many parts of India, with that useful product, were five miles to the east of this place. The Seree brought me a piece of stone, which he assured me was petrified wood, and which certain-

ly had much the appearance of it. In walking about, I picked up several lumps of the same, in which the grain of the wood was plainly discernible. It was hard, siliceous, and seemed composed of different lamina. The Birmans said it was the nature of the soil that caused this transmutation; and added, that the petrifying quality of the earth at this place was such, that leaves of trees shaken off by the wind were not unfrequently changed into stone before they could be decayed by time. The face of the country was altered, and the banks of the river were totally barren. The ground was superficially covered with quartz-gravel, and concreted masses of the same material were thickly scattered. The mouth of the creek was crowded with large boats, waiting to receive a lading of oil; and immense pyramids of earthen jars were raised within and round the village, disposed in the same manner as shot and shells are piled in an arsenal. This place is inhabited only by Potters, who carry on an extensive manufactory, and find full employment. The smell of the oil was extremely offensive. We saw several thousand jars filled with it ranged along the bank. Some of these were continually breaking, and the contents, mingling with the sand, formed a very filthy consistence. Mr Wood had the curiosity to walk to the wells; but, though I felt the same desire, I thought it prudent to postpone visiting them until my return, when I was likely to have more leisure, and to be less the object of observation.

At seven in the morning, on the 5th of July, we left the neighbourhood of Earthoil Wells. After passing Pengkioum, where a small river unites with the Irrawaddy, the face of the country re-

sumed its verdant appearance, and the trees shot up with their usual vigour. The bed of the river, from bank to bank, was very wide. We judged it to be four miles; but the stream, being divided into different channels, formed low intermediate islands of sand, which are covered when the waters attain their utmost height. On the left we saw the town of Sembewghewn, whence there is a road that leads through the western hills into Arracan, which is accounted much the least difficult passage. This is the place to which all Bengal articles of merchandise imported by way of Arracan are brought, and are here embarked on the Irrawaddy. Shortly after we saw a large town on the eastern side, with several neat temples. It was called Pakang-yay. Lofty palmyra, the tamarind, and banyan trees, spread a pleasant shade around it. Here also were some heavy trading boats. The western shore seemed rich and level. We brought to about six in the afternoon, a little below Sillahmew, a large town remarkable for its manufactories of silk. The fleet had not long been moored, when the retail merchants flocked down to the water side to dispose of their wares. They carried in lackered boxes pieces of silken cloth, and of silk and cotton mixed, which they offered for sale at what I considered a very high price. I was asked fifteen tackal, about 2*l.* Sterling, for a piece of moderate fineness, five yards long, and barely one yard wide. They were mostly woven in patterns adapted to the Birman dress. The silk of which these goods are made comes from Yunan, the south-west province of China. It is brought from Ummerapoora to this place in a raw state, and is returned in the web. The colours

are bright and beautiful, but do not appear to be durable. The texture is close and strong, and it wears, as I was informed, much longer than any China or Indian manufacture.

Sillah-mew is a handsome town, shaded by wide spreading trees, and embellished with several temples. A smooth bank sloping to the river, and clothed with the finest verdure, adds much to its beauty. The soil in general is but poor. Some fields were regularly fenced, and cattle in large herds were grazing in the neighbourhood. Dr Buchanan informed me that he saw the crotolaria juncea growing spontaneously, which would yield good hemp or flax.

On the sixth of July we made but little way. The current was violent, and the wind not strong enough to enable us to stem it. We were obliged to have recourse to poles, and were pushed forward with excessive labour by the boatmen. In one place, where an island contracted the stream, we sent out an anchor a-head in a small cutter, and hauled on it by a hawser. The Arracan mountains appeared to the west, and a conspicuous hill, lofty, and of a conical form, called Poupa, was in sight to the eastward. A few villages, and many temples, skirted the banks. In the afternoon, the fleet made fast to the eastern shore. There was neither town nor village nigh. It was about four miles below Seenghoo, and though we saw little cultivation, there were several herds of cattle. Dr Buchanan, whose ardour for botanical researches often made me apprehensive for his safety, in wandering through the thickets in quest of plants, heard the report of a musket at a distance. On his approach to the spot, he found

some peasants about to skin a bullock that had just been killed by a tiger. The shot had caused the animal to abandon his prey, and in its retreat it most fortunately took another way from that which the Doctor came. This was not the only time that his thirst after knowledge, and reliance upon his gun, led him into danger. A musket is a very precarious defence against the sudden assault of the most ferocious and terrible of all animals.

Whilst we were at tea, the Seree informed us, that further on there is a small river which enters the Irrawaddy, at a place called Yoo-wa, and that two days journey up this river is a large town called Yoo-miou. He observed also, that an extensive tract of country is inhabited by a people called Yoo, whom he represented as exceedingly ugly, having protuberant bellies and white-teeth. The Birmans, it is to be observed, both men and women, colour their teeth, their eyelashes, and the edges of their eyelids, with black. * The Yoos are subjects of the Birman state, and observe the same religious worship. They speak the language of Tavay, which is nothing more than a provincial dialect of the Birman tongue.

We left our nightly station at the customary hour, and favoured by a fair breeze, sailed through a country diversified by small barren hills, on which there was little vegetation, and by green fertile valleys, cultivated, and laid out in farms. The

* This custom is not confined to the Birmans, particularly the operation of colouring the eyelashes. The women of Hindostan and Persia commonly practise it. They deem it beneficial, as well as becoming. The collyrium they use is called Surma, the Persian name of antimony.

petrifactions, like those we found at Yaynangheoum, were frequent here. Indigo was growing in one of the valleys. About twelve o'clock we came to a rocky point that projected far into the river, round which the current set with such excessive rapidity, that our boats were a long time in getting past, and did not at length effect it without difficulty and some danger. The Maywoon obligingly sent his war-boats to our assistance. After we had surmounted this impediment, we came to a green level bank, where there was a wide range of pasturage, and many cattle feeding. Seenghoo is a large town. In its neighbourhood, and for a great distance along the eastern bank, small temples were built close to the river. We did not make much way in this day's journey, although our labour was great. In the evening we brought to near Keahoh, a poor village, where the inhabitants get their livelihood by extracting molasses from the palmyra tree, of which they make tolerably good sugar.

Although the soil near the river is in most places unproductive and barren, yet, as we advanced nothwards on the following day, population increased. Every little hill and rising ground was crowned with a temple. That of Logah-nunda is distinguished for its superior size. It is a clumsy inelegant mass of building, elevated on a semicircular terrace; the base is painted with different colours, and the cupola is richly gilded.

Leaving the temple of Logah-nundah, we approached the once magnificent city of Pagahm. We could see little more from the river than a few straggling houses, which bore the appearance of having once been a connected street. In fact,

scarcely any thing remains of ancient Pagahm, except its numerous mouldering temples, and the vestiges of an old brick fort, the ramparts of which are still to be traced. The town of Neoundah, about four miles to the north, which may be called a continuation of Pagahm, has flourished in proportion as the latter has decayed. We passed a small river named, in the days of splendour, Shoe-kiaung, or the Golden Stream. Here we spent a night, rendered unpleasant by the stormy weather.

We reached Neoundah early on the 9th of July. At this place the deputation from the capital, of which I had been apprised by the Shawbunder, was waiting my arrival. The Seree informed me, that a temporary house, which I saw on a clear piece of ground about 100 yards from the brink, had been erected as a compliment to me; it was much larger than that which the Maywoon had prepared at Meeaday. Early in the afternoon I left my boat, and was received at the house by the Birman officers with every formal testimony of respect. On a part of the floor elevated a few inches, a carpet was spread, on which I took my seat. The principal person of the deputation was a Woondock, or junior counsellor of state; the others were the governor of a district called Mieng-dong, north of Ava, the governor of Pein-keing bordering on China, and the commandant of the Siamese guards. The Woondock was a lively man, about forty-five years old; the rest appeared of more advanced age, not less than sixty-five or seventy. They all wore the tzaloe, or chain of nobility. The Woondock, though from his station he had precedence of the rest, yet was not of such high rank as the two governors. The utmost de-

corum was preserved at this meeting, the Woondock spoke in the name of the others, and Baba-Sheen interpreted in the language of Hindostan. After pompously expatiating upon the honour which his Birman majesty had been pleased to confer on me, by sending a deputation to welcome me, and a barge with war-boats to tow it, he asked some trivial questions, and offered his services to procure whatever we stood in need of. Having discoursed for a short time, a band of music and a company of dancing girls were introduced; drums, gongs, the Indian syrinda, or guitar, the Birman harp and fiddle, with loud and harsh clarionets, almost deafened us with their noise. Among the dancers, one girl much excelled her companions in symmetry of form and elegance of movement. She was richly dressed; and in showing the modes of dancing practised in different countries, displayed a fine person to great advantage. The manner of Cassay is most consonant to the English taste, in which the time varies suddenly from quick to slow. The entertainment, however, seemed entirely lost upon the elders, who sat in solemn insensibility, chewing their beetle nut, and regarding with profound gravity the voluptuous attitudes of a very beautiful woman. The amusement did not end till past nine o'clock. I directed a few pieces of silver to be distributed among the musicians and dancers. The Birman officers retired without ceremony, and we passed the night on board our respective boats.

The next morning I was again visited in form, with the additional honour of the company of the Maywoon at Pegue, a compliment which, either from pride or policy, he had never before conde-

scended to pay. The Woondock, however, was here his superior. We conversed for an hour on indifferent subjects, and the Maywoon informed his friends that Dr Buchanan was a botanist, and had made several drawings of plants. On a wish being expressed to see them, the Doctor obligingly gratified their curiosity with a sight of some that had been executed by the Bengal painter, under his own inspection. These were instantly recognised by the Birmans, who mentioned the names of the originals. They are themselves fond of vegetable productions, which they use very generally in medicine. About eleven o'clock the assembly broke up, and it was settled that we should pursue our journey on the following day.

The remaining time was spent in viewing as much of this once flourishing city as the shortness of our stay would admit. On entering the town, we came into a long, narrow, winding street, about thirty feet wide ; the houses were built of bamboo, and raised from the ground. This street was full of shops, containing no other articles than lackered ware. Boxes, trays, cups, &c. varnished in a very neat manner, were displayed in the front of the shops. They were of various colours. Some had figures painted on them, others wreaths of flowers. Leaving this street, we crossed a water-course on a good wooden bridge, and came to the bazar, or provision market. The green stalls seemed to be well provided with rice, pulse, greens, garlic, onions, and fruit. There were also fresh fish, gnapee, and dead lizards, which latter the Birmans account a delicacy ; but there was not any meat. In our progress, we passed over another bridge, and saw several streets running in parallel lines,

Some of these were inhabited by carriers, whose cattle were feeding on rice straw round their houses. Having reached the extremity of the town in this direction, we came upon a well paved road, that led to the great temple named Shoezeegoon, to which we proceeded. On each side of the road there was a range of small temples, neglected and in ruins. The kioums, or monasteries, were in good repair, and we saw some handsome houses for the accommodation of strangers. Shoezeegoon is neither so large nor so well built as the temples at Rangoon or Pegue; the height does not exceed 150 feet. It is surrounded by a spacious area paved with broad flags, on which there are a number of lesser buildings, profusely gilded, and laboriously carved. A staircase on the outside leads up to a gallery, about a third of the height of the principal temple, whence we had an extensive prospect of the country, which appeared to be exceedingly unproductive and barren. The ruins of innumerable religious buildings were to be seen in every direction, which cover a space of ground not less than six or seven miles along the river, and three miles inland. Pagahm is said to have been the residence of forty-five successive monarchs, and was abandoned 500 years ago in consequence of a divine admonition. Whatever may be its true history, it certainly was once a place of no ordinary splendour. Returning by a different way, we walked through an alley occupied by blacksmiths shops, furnished with bill-hooks, spike-nails, adzes, &c. A little farther on we saw the ruins of a street that had been consumed by fire only two days before. From se-

venty to eighty houses were destroyed by the conflagration. It was the Tackally, and the sufferers were the already wretched, the miserable public prostitutes.

In the afternoon I directed my walk southward, and was much surprised at the number of religious edifices I beheld. They differ in structure from those which we had seen in the lower provinces. Instead of a slender spire rising to a great height from an expanded base, the temples of Pagahm, in general, carry up a heavy breadth to very near the top, and then come abruptly to a point, which gives a clumsy appearance to the buildings. Many of the most ancient temples at this place are not solid at the bottom. A well arched dome supports a ponderous superstructure. Within, an image of Gaudma sits enshrined. Four Gothic doorways open into the dome. In one of these I saw a human figure standing erect, which the Seree * told me was Gaudma; and another of the same personage, lying on his right side asleep, both of gigantic stature. The divinity, however, is rarely to be found in these attitudes. The posture in which he is generally depictured, is sitting cross-legged on a pedestal, adorned with representations of the leaf of the sacred lotus carved upon the base; the left hand of the image rests upon his lap, and the right is pendant. Passing through the suburbs, we came to a part where the inhabitants were employed in expressing oil from the sesamum seed. The grain is put into a deep

* I suspect the authenticity of my information on this point, which, I imagine, proceeded from ignorance in the Seree. Of these figures, which he called Gaudma, I conceive the one erect to be the Hindoo Ananda, the other Nà-rà-yàn, sleeping on the waters.

wooden trough, in which it is pressed by an upright timber fixed in a frame; the force is increased by a long lever, on the extremity of which a man sits and guides a bullock that moves in a circle, thus turning and pressing the seed at the same time. The machine was simple, and answered the purpose effectually. There were not less than 200 of those mills within a narrow compass. From the circumstance of the cattle being in good order, we concluded that they were fed on the seed after the oil was extracted. The land about Pagahm scarcely yields sufficient vegetation to nourish goats.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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